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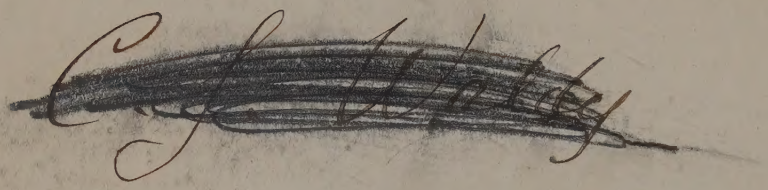
SEYMOUR VANDELEUR

THE STORY OF A BRITISH OFFICER



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SEYMOUR
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SEYMOUR VANDELEUR

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL, SCOTS GUARDS & IRISH GUARDS

A PLAIN NARRATIVE OF THE PART PLAYED BY BRITISH OFFICERS IN THE ACQUISITION OF COLONIES AND DEPENDENCIES IN AFRICA REPRESENTING A DOMINION OF GREATER EXTENT THAN INDIA ADDED TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN LESS THAN TWENTY YEARS

BY COLONEL F. I. MAXSE
C.B., D.S.O., COLDSTREAM GUARDS
WITH WATER-COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY NICO JUNGMANN

THREE FACTS CONCERNING BRITISH AFRICA, EXCLUDING EGYPT

Dates	Area in Square Miles	Miles of Railway	Trade
1902	3,598,806	8440	£118,778,600
1884	275,131	1410	£25,454,300
Increase	3,323,675	7030	£93,324,300

See also the comparative maps at the end of this volume

LONDON
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TO

SEYMOUR VANDELEUR'S

BROTHER-OFFICERS

OF THE BRIGADE OF GUARDS

I DEDICATE THIS MEMOIR OF

THEIR COMRADE AND FRIEND

IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY

REMIND THEM OF HIS STRENUOUS

LIFE AND HELP OTHERS TO

FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

F. I. M.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Early Life	1
II.	The Story of Uganda	26
III.	Soldiering in Uganda	46
IV.	The Story of Nigeria	68
V.	The Acquisition of British Nigeria	94
VI.	England on the Nile	122
VII.	The Egyptian Army at Work	146
VIII.	On the Atbara	185
IX.	Omdurman, September 1898	211
X.	Another Year in the Sudan	239
XI.	In the Boer War	254
XII.	The End	282

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Facing page
Lieutenant Vandeleur, D.S.O., Scots Guards	*Frontispiece*
Cahiracon, Vandeleur's Home on the Shannon, Ireland	14
The Victoria Nyanza	34
Masai Warriors	48
Road-Making in a Uganda Forest	62
On the March in Nigeria	106
A Water-Wheel on the Nile	126
Lord Kitchener in 1890	156
A Soldier of the 9th Sudanese	184
Maxwell's Brigade at the Commencement of the Action, Battle of Omdurman, 1898	222
9th Sudanese, Guard of Honour at Omdurman, 1898	250
The Boer Laager at Paardeberg on the Morning of the Surrender	264
"On Trek" in South Africa	274
Brevet Lieut.-Colonel Seymour Vandeleur, D.S.O., Irish Guards, 1901	282

MAPS

1. Somaliland	24
2. Uganda and East Africa	66
3. Nigeria and W. Africa	120
4. Plan "Battle of the Atbara"	208
5. Plan "Battle of Omdurman"	232
6. Egyptian Sudan, No. 1	238
7. Egyptian Sudan, No. 2	252
8. Africa in 1884	*End of book*
9. Partition of Africa 1902	"

SEYMOUR VANDELEUR

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

CECIL FOSTER SEYMOUR VANDELEUR, the subject of this memoir, known to his friends as Seymour Vandeleur, was born in London on July 11, 1869, the eldest child of Hector Stewart Vandeleur, Esq., of Kilrush and Cahiracon in county Clare. His mother was a daughter of William Orme Foster, Esq., of Apley Park, Shropshire. His father is at present Lord-Lieutenant of county Clare.

The Vandeleurs are of Norman origin and have been settled in Ireland since 1660. They seem ever to have been a race of soldiers and Seymour did but follow the traditions of his family in his life of active service abroad. Of his five great-uncles, four attained the rank of general officer and figured conspicuously in the campaigns of their day. Thus, General Sir John Ormsby Vandeleur, K.C.B., born in 1763, commanded a Light Cavalry brigade at Waterloo. General Pakenham Vandeleur fell at Delhi. Crofton, another brother, died in Antigua. The fourth, also General Vandeleur, held the command at Cape Town during the Kafir War of 1801. Frederick, the fifth brother, did not live to gain the distinction won by the others, for he was killed in action while still a captain at the battle of Vittoria.

In describing a life which still touches our own times so closely and whose incidents are familiar to many, it is better to avoid personal description and allow the plain narrative of a soldier's service to tell its own tale. Yet no life of this type of officer would be complete which omitted to give some idea of his character and personality, inasmuch as it was through them that he achieved success.

His short, brilliant career was not the outcome of lucky chance or outside influences : each step in rank, every decoration, was the reward of hard work and steady efficiency, tested in the only adequate way—on active service under various commanders and in various places. With him there were no spasmodic efforts with alternate fits of idleness and energy : from boyhood the trend of his life was even ; he worked because it was his nature to work, and he worked well because it was not in him to do things by halves. His diary, begun at the age of fifteen while at Eton and continued without the break of a day until his death, gives an insight into his consistency of purpose and a clue to his character such as no other record could convey. Indeed, the zeal with which he played and worked and the variety of his employments are sometimes bewildering, though he himself obviously regarded them as a matter of course. Some men have a craving for physical exercise which turns their existence into a round of drudgery and their minds into narrow grooves, without contributing to their happiness ; others are much tied to indoor pursuits, but Seymour never made " heavy weather " over anything he undertook. His happy nature prompted him to do things without expecting reward or striving after effect ; work was as congenial as play, play as absorbing as work, so much so that

one is led to inquire what he himself reckoned as leisure ?

I recollect well that in 1898 he took over command of the depôt of my battalion at Omdurman, whilst it was absent on an expedition in which Vandeleur would have been delighted to join; it was, in fact, escorting Major Marchand and his French "mission" from Fashoda to the Abyssinian border. Meanwhile, work at the depôt entailed the drilling of Sudanese recruits and a goodly dose of what may be termed the drudgery of soldiering. Yet so heartily did he do it, though actually an officer of another corps, that long after he left the native officers and men would ask affectionately after Bimbashi Vandeleur, and he would write and inquire about them; moreover, the sound work he put into some 400 recruits was amply tested when they subsequently joined for duty. It was this power of throwing himself heart and soul into what he was doing that made him a delightful companion on service and a refreshing contrast to those who have a habit of grumbling from the beginning to the end of every campaign. His sense of humour and cheerful pluck forebade him to indulge in the privilege of many good Britishers—namely "to grouse." Truly, thirty-two years of such a life were worth more both to himself and to those who loved him than the three-score and ten allotted to some of us.

To return to his early years. Seymour at ten began school life at Farnborough in the private establishment of the Rev. A. Morton. Three years later he went to Eton, to the Rev. Edmund Warre's house, and on Dr. Warre succeeding to the headmastership, Seymour was transferred with others to the house of the Rev. Stewart Donaldson, Mr. Impey being his classical tutor. At Eton he seems to have been

thoroughly happy without entirely wasting his time. Boys like him of energetic, manly tastes enjoy to the full the varied occupations and interests of a big school, and are popular with masters and boys alike. In fact, he was just the sort of boy for Eton, possessing sufficient strength of character to avoid being spoiled, yet worthy alike of its traditions and associations.

Nevertheless, a careful study of his life does not enable one to attribute his advancement to the training or instruction he received at school, and the fact that he was a public-school boy—as are most men of his class—cannot be cited in favour of our system of educating average boys. Great Britain is apparently entering on a period of strenuous competition in all spheres of enterprise and in all parts of the world, and it is questionable whether the traditional education which until now has qualified Englishmen to compete with other Englishmen, will in future enable them also to compete with better equipped Americans and Germans. Our public-schools are not merely or even chiefly "seats of learning," but surely the hours allotted to study might at least be devoted to some useful purpose. As to what is or is not useful, I would merely remark—with the respect due to our appointed teachers—that neither headmasters nor their assistants are really qualified judges. They conscientiously teach up to the standard in vogue, but even within its narrow limits they are never taught the difficult art of imparting elementary instruction. They are usually public-school boys, nurtured on the old curriculum. From school they pass through a university and take a degree, after which they settle down for life to educate boys for the various professions. I have no desire to criticise individuals or a class, but can it be truthfully

said that our slip-shod plan of selecting and training schoolmasters does provide a suitable education for the soldiers, lawyers, business-men, politicians, and civil-servants of the British Empire ?

In truth, we have none of us received at school any solid groundwork of practical instruction, and those who desire to acquaint themselves with the world in which they live have to pick up the elements of history, geography and money matters after their school-days are over. By this method we usually remain amateurs in all the walks of life, unaccustomed to sustained mental effort and constantly displaying ignorance of rudimentary facts.

Our public schools, enthroned amidst the traditions of past centuries, form each a society, a little world of its own, in which the social grades, the unwritten laws, the standards of public opinion are preserved and upheld with the enthusiasm of youth. The result is in many ways excellent, producing a high standard of honour as between boy and boy, an innate sense of justice, fair play and straight dealing, an *esprit de corps* and a self-sacrifice for the common good, which have richly endowed Englishmen in all parts of the world. Such advantages are not lightly to be bartered in exchange for mere knowledge ; but the drawback lies in the fact that the school world is exclusive, that, instead of being a means to an end, a threshold across which to enter upon life, it degenerates into being an end in itself. Many boys, and parents too, consider school success in work or games as the *ne plus ultra* of ambition and those who obtain it are surrounded with so transcendant a glory, that they may well believe themselves absolved from further effort. They feel they can never be such " swells " again and are content to rest on a past which ended at nineteen.

Who has not known several such in his school-days? Brilliant demi-gods, whose after-life has been marked by no ambition, whose abilities have never lifted them above obscurity? On the average boy, too, school opinion makes a lasting impression, and he unconsciously models himself on the lines thus laid down. In our youth the best, the only thing was to be a "public-school boy," and we remain public-school boys all our days. Look where you will, in the Army, in Parliament, in the leading professions, in our railways, and in our business houses, you will see a number of excellent amateurs struggling ineffectually with technical problems. They make admirable subordinates and shine most especially in their behaviour to native populations in India, the Sudan, Egypt and other places. But when it becomes necessary to excel in a particular line, to go one better, to get out of a groove and be something of a specialist, the Englishman is disinclined to leave the beaten track. Such ideas were discountenanced in the old school-days as cranky and tending to divide a boy from his fellows. He was trained to be a gentleman, not an expert, and it does not occur to him to try to be both. Moreover, he lacks the necessary groundwork of modern history, languages, geography and science, which are painfully acquired after the age of twenty-five. So he sticks to the school standard which was good enough for him and his compeers. Thus it comes to pass that mediocrity, if it but bear the accepted hall-mark, passes muster amongst us and is promoted to positions which demand capacity and special training. There are of course exceptions; men endowed with a strength of character which breaks through tradition. Such was Seymour Vandeleur, who became prominent amongst his contemporaries not by reason of his public-

school training, but independently and perhaps in spite of it.

Be this as it may, Seymour threw himself with energy into the life at Eton. He elected to be a "dry bob," and was indefatigable, according to the season of the year, at fives, cricket, and football, all of which he played for his house. The diary contains regular accounts of runs with the beagles and the sport they showed. He was a keen volunteer, being promoted sergeant in 1886, and complains with sadness of the poor attendance of the corps at field-days ; in fact, it was not then the fashion to be a volunteer. He represented the school at rifle shooting as one of the members of the team. His vigour at games and cheerfulness on all occasions made him many friends, several of whom passed into Sandhurst and joined the Brigade of Guards with him. He was steady at book-work, devoting fixed hours every day to "extras," and consequently passed straight from Eton into Sandhurst—fifty-second out of ninety candidates—without going to any crammer. He was fond of reading, especially military books, and naturally quick at picking up foreign languages in spite of inadequate school teaching. His holidays were often spent in France, and he took regular lessons from a Monsieur Cauvet, who taught him enough French to enable him to enjoy plays at the Théatre Français—no mean test. At Dinard he took to sketching, a subject in which he was afterwards most proficient. In Switzerland we find him mountaineering ; and, as all pursuits were entered into with enthusiasm and were encouraged by a father and a mother who devoted themselves to his holidays, he entered the Royal Military College (Sandhurst) on September 1, 1887, with a larger stock of special and general information than is usually found in our boys of eighteen.

The practical work at Sandhurst, particularly the surveying and military sketching, was congenial, and at the end of one year he passed out forty-fourth out of 138, with special certificates in topography and riding. From Sandhurst, too, dates his first acquaintance with polo which ever afterwards remained his favourite amusement. He played it wherever he went, often in places where it had never been seen before, such as Uganda, Nigeria and parts of the Sudan, and when he could not get enough players for a game, he would spend an hour knocking a ball about alone. Within a few weeks of his first handling a polo club we find him playing for Sandhurst against the 18th Hussars and getting handsomely defeated in the attempt. But he soon developed a better game and ended by playing in many first-class matches at Hurlingham.

After Sandhurst, a happy spell of shooting and hunting at Apley, his grandfather's place in Shropshire, occupied him till February, 1889, when he joined the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards in Dublin, as a second lieutenant. Now, there is a certain amount of misconception prevalent regarding the so-called ordeal of joining a regiment ; but it is in no sense a formidable undertaking, as those who have had to go through with it are well aware. A self-conscious boy who is just beginning to be a man no doubt feels shy and awkward, but this soon wears off, and my civilian readers should dismiss from their minds any phantom horrors which may have been conjured up. The truth is, that the standard of general conduct and military efficiency amongst the captains and subalterns of the British Army is a high one ; in none is it higher than in the Brigade of Guards ; and one purpose of this memoir will be amply fulfilled if it should succeed

in doing justice to a body of officers of whom Vandeleur was but a type. All ranks have recently been assailed by floods of amateur criticism, excusable and useful as regards certain regrettable incidents in the conduct of military affairs ; for the Army, like the nation, has for years been run on amateur lines, the product of our amateur schools, and will continue to be so run until we " enter " boys as military cadets on some plan similar to that recently adopted by the Admiralty. But meanwhile, amidst the welter of indiscriminate fault-finding, it is satisfactory to recognise that no case has been established against the junior officers, captains and subalterns, in actual command of men in the field. The regimental officer was highly tested in the late war ; he was not found wanting ; and his men relied on him with confidence.

This good result, if closely examined, must chiefly be attributed to the efficiency of the regimental system, which is based less upon official regulations than upon time-honoured traditions of duty and conduct. Through long periods of peace and short periods of war, in the various climates and garrisons of the British Empire a high standard has been maintained, not by repeating copybook maxims and attending to grandmotherly effusions in the press, but by a system of discipline which has had the merit of being effective in its results. It is based upon a sound moral code amongst the officers, handed down from generation to generation, a code to which the newly-joined subaltern must learn to conform. As a rule he is only too anxious to do so and be admitted to full membership of the society of his brother officers, for the unwritten laws of a mess are no hardship to a manly young fellow. A certain number of boys are, however, thrust into the Army without regard to their suit-

ability or qualifications for soldiering, and some parents seem to think that the regimental code should be modified in order to admit these square pegs into round holes. For, strange as it may seem to those who imagine that any youth will become a good officer, I venture to say there are some temperaments to whom it is positively wicked to entrust the lives of good soldiers. Such men may be endowed with first-rate ability for other work, though there is no use for them in the Army, and it would certainly be a kindness to remove them whilst still young to more suitable spheres of occupation; but their relatives have endowed them with a so-called military education, have paid for a military uniform and wish to keep them in the Army, unless some serious offence can be proved against them. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to frame a specific charge against a young officer who is not by nature suited to command even a corporal's guard; and if several such should congregate in a battalion, they form a coterie amongst themselves, a clique of dissentients which holds itself aloof from the accepted code and is thoroughly bad for the discipline of the corps. Perhaps the commanding officer, if he be a good judge of boys and an exceptionally strong man, may be able to get rid of the nuisance through the official channel; but he will find it no easy task unless he be supported by his superiors and protected from public annoyance by the inefficient boy's relatives.

Surely, when we realise the general advantages of permitting officers to enforce their own standard of conduct and recollect how rarely they have abused this privilege, we are led to the conclusion that, instead of endeavouring to curtail their power of ejecting black sheep, we should, in our wisdom, confer on regimental

officers increased and authorised facilities for eliminating those who are unable to command the respect of their men.

To Seymour Vandeleur at any rate, joining the Scots Guards was an unmixed pleasure. He found his Sandhurst friend, Cecil Lowther, just arrived, and ten days later we find him installed at the Commanding Officer's whist-table, an unheard-of proceeding in any Continental army, yet a sufficient illustration of the tone which pervades a good British battalion. During the next five years he stuck closely to regimental duty in Dublin, London, Pirbright and Windsor, and realised that soldiering in these desirable quarters entailed a deal of hard work; for, during the first three years of his service, an officer of the Guards is kept steadily at duty without any relaxation in the form of leave. The theory is that youth is the age for education and improvement, but also the age in which slovenly habits are easily acquired and perpetuated. Consequently the youngest officers, without exception, are taught all they can be taught and given no opportunities of being slack, either on or off duty. They are kept continuously busy under the supervision of the adjutant from early morn till late in the afternoon, in the hope that the groove of doing their work thoroughly and energetically may be persevered in afterwards—an expectation which is fulfilled or not according to the disposition of the individual. Shirking and loafing are alike tabooed.

When Vandeleur joined, Colonel the Hon. J. Vanneck was commanding officer and Mr. Erskine adjutant, of the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. Attached to the Left Flank company in February, Seymour passed in company drill in March and entered on his daily round of duty, going on guard at the Castle,

coming off guard to do a picquet, attending three battalion parades daily and gradually learning the interior economy of his company. June and July were spent at musketry in the Curragh Camp ; in September the battalion moved to Chelsea Barracks, London ; and Vandeleur went on the Queen's Guard at St. James's Palace for the first time—always a memorable episode in a young Guardsman's soldiering, but one which loses its charm after a four months' spell of winter guard-mounting has entailed two nights out of bed in each week—the intervening days being filled in with picquets, drills, winter schemes, war games, route-marches, lectures, judging distance practices and "shouting" drill. A month of duty at the Depôt (Caterham) under Major Crabbe completed his first year of service, during which his main relaxation had been an occasional game of racquets at Prince's Club.

Owing to his proficiency in military mapmaking, he was selected to instruct a class of non-commissioned officers in topography, and the first months of 1890 were spent at this work, usually on Epsom Downs, at a season of the year when they can scarcely be called a popular resort. In March he rode in the winning team of the Brigade of Guards point-to-point race, and during next summer enjoyed a full polo season at Hurlingham, being now of a calibre to play in first-class matches and with such crack players as the three Peats, Toby Rawlinson, Lord Harrington, John Watson, Major Peters and others. It was his habit to buy ponies more or less in the rough, train them to the game with infinite care and trouble, and with excellent results. There were other and more exceptional amusements this summer, such as an ascent in a balloon from the Military Exhibition with Lord

Edward Cecil, of the Grenadiers, but the diary gives no details of this expedition save that the balloon descended harmlessly in a field near Chelmsford, and that the half share of the costs amounted to £5 15*s*.

In August ensued the usual musketry course at Pirbright Camp, after which the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards moved to Windsor and Seymour obtained five days' leave, his first holiday, every moment of which was devoted to cub-hunting and partridge shooting. Windsor offers facilities for a good deal of sport of a kind, what with the Household Brigade Drag (to which he occasionally acted as whip and had the usual quota of falls), Mr. Garth's foxhounds, and the Queen's staghounds, now suppressed; but the winter of 1890 was unusually severe, the Thames being frozen over for weeks, so skating took the place of hunting, and the long days on guard at the Castle were spent in the splendid library to which the officers have access.

The summer of 1891 saw a new departure in Vandeleur's military life, as he was selected to be trained at Aldershot in the newly formed (provisional) Mounted Infantry Regiment for three months, under Lieutenant-Colonel (now General Sir Edward) Hutton; he was attached to the company composed of the Black Watch, Seaforth, Cameron and Gordon Highlanders, and amongst other officers in the regiment may be mentioned poor Roddy Owen, who afterwards died on service in the Dongola Expedition, and Mr. (now Lieutenant-Colonel) Jenner, D.S.O. Here he was kept busier than ever at Mounted Infantry work in the camp at Bourley Bottom, scouting, long field days and autumn manœuvres, and it was always a satisfaction to him to recollect, when employed during the South African War in General Hutton's Mounted Infantry Brigade, that he was in the first batch of

officers thus trained, and Sir Edward has several times expressed the very high opinion he entertained of Seymour Vandeleur.

Seymour was promoted Lieutenant in May 1892, and was then ordered to go through the School of Musketry at Hythe, where he spent most of the summer and passed out with a special certificate. Taking time by the forelock, and as though conscious that future years would find him fully occupied, he at once set to work to pass the examination for promotion to the rank of captain and devoted a portion of his winter leave to the necessary book-work. He managed, however, during the autumn to attend the cavalry manœuvres at Frensham.

The year 1893 witnessed an ever-increasing desire to learn about things in general and to acquire the most varied accomplishments. Often in the course of a single afternoon we discover Seymour passing through the hands of three instructors; Peall, the great professional, gave him billiard lessons; Saunders of Prince's Club taught him tennis; a corporal of the Scots Guards band gave him flute lessons; he spent a month in Berlin with a tutor to brush up colloquial German and then competed for an interpreter's certificate; and no sooner was this examination completed than we see him tackling Spanish with a Signor Véda. Meanwhile, May was spent at Aldershot undergoing a veterinary class and examination. As all this extra work was undertaken in addition to his regimental duty, we get a glimpse of Seymour's firm resolve to qualify himself for whatever might be required of him.

August and September were taken up with manœuvres on a somewhat larger scale than had previously been attempted, and a complete Guards brigade of four

battalions assembled at Frensham and operated on Swanley Downs where, at the termination of hostilities, 15,000 men marched past Field-Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.

By this time a long-cherished plan had matured itself in the minds of the two friends, Cecil Lowther and Seymour Vandeleur, and they obtained four months' leave of absence to travel in Somaliland and shoot big game. Rarely were two companions more suited to such an enterprise or more worthy of its pleasures and opportunities. To Seymour it meant more than a mere shooting trip, for he had made up his mind not only to penetrate beyond the explored country, but also to map the whole route; he consequently prepared himself for this work by taking a course of lessons in the use of the sextant at the Royal Geographical Society, and so greatly did he profit by this instruction that on his return he presented a map to the society, which is still the main source of information for that part of Somaliland.

The friends quitted London on December 1, 1893, *en route* for the Dark Continent, which was, with brief intervals, to absorb the remainder of Seymour's life. Travelling as rapidly as possible *via* Paris, Marseilles, Port Said and Suez, they disembarked at Aden on December 13. Here Lowther waited in order to purchase provisions and bring on the baggage which had started by the all-sea route, whilst Vandeleur embarked on a coasting steamboat for Berbera (the capital of British Somaliland) where be began to organise a camel caravan for the march into the interior. Big changes, as we know, have been wrought in Eastern lands since Europeans first discovered India, but one reform has never been accomplished, namely,

to instil activity into stray native retainers. They regard energy as a palpable blot on the character of the white man and treat it with amiable tolerance. Lowther found the same notion prevalent in Aden, so they both learned the necessity of patience in Eastern travel and the insufficiency of four months' leave. The latter they provided for by telegraphing home for an extra month.

At last, on January 5, 1894, all was ready, and the caravan of thirty camels, four ponies, two donkeys, four sheep and twenty-seven men set out for the interior, across a barren desert called the Haud.*

The nineteen days' march from the coast can be described in a few lines. The great charm of the journey lay in its absolute isolation from anything resembling a beaten track and the delightful uncertainty of what might be in front. Each day presented fresh problems, yet every detail had to be arranged without advice from experienced hands. The tourist in Europe, who fusses with telegrams to hotels to have his bedroom retained and his dinner ordered, has no more notion of the real pleasures of travel than a cuckoo understands the rearing of a nest of young birds. But a traveller with an African caravan learns and enjoys many things. After a cool night, the early rise, the bustle of packing tents and provisions on unwilling camels, the hurried breakfast in the dark, these unavoidable troubles vanish directly he mounts his pony and rides forth in the delicious atmosphere of Africa's early morn. Dawn has appeared, nature is awakening, freshness is in the air and a hundred buzzings and cooings proclaim the rising sun. Indeed, 'tis good to make the most of his rising, for by noon he will have subdued us all, man, beast, trees, convert-

* See map facing page 24.

ing nature into a sort of brazen image of stifled life till evening.

Vandeleur and Lowther, during the daily march, scoured the country on both flanks for game and bagged some koodoo, oryx and dig-dig—the latter a pretty little animal like a miniature deer. Thus they hardened themselves for future work and accustomed themselves to the ways of their respective *shikaris*. The natives they met with were friendly but in dire distress, owing to the lateness of the rains and the frequency of Abyssinian raids from across the border; and as the caravan pushed further inland the servants became somewhat alarmed, and the cook even suggested he should be served out with a gun on the line of march, "because he did not wish to be like a woman, without a weapon." His whim was not gratified, and he was requested to devote more attention to the menu, of which the following is a common sample:

DINER DU JOUR.

Potage—Koodoo.
Poisson—Sardines frites.
Rôt—Bœuf corné (corned).
Entremet—Cabin Biscuit à l'apricot jam.

Crossing the Haud entailed five days' marching with water carried on camels; the country consisted of a "wilderness of small trees and thorn bushes, followed by eight miles of open plain without a vestige of anything on it but stones, and then again the same wilderness of bushes; and it will give you some idea of the sort of country if I mention that, when we reached the watering-place, only four camels could be watered every hour, as water did not trickle through the sand any faster."

However, when they got to the Awari pools they

found them deep and full of water, and consequently the resort of game from the drier districts in the neighbourhood. In fact, on the very night of their arrival a lion was heard roaring close to the zariba and tents at 2 A.M., and was actually seen in an open space on its way to water. Intense excitement prevailed amongst the men and camels and at daybreak Lowther and Vandeleur started off on its tracks.

"After walking three hours through wooded country, checking at two or three bits of high grass and brush, Nur (my *shikari*) and I were going through a thick place, when we suddenly saw him thirty yards to our left, looking at us. It took me a little time to make sure of my aim, as the undergrowth was thick and he was exactly the colour of the grass. I fired with the .500 bore, and the bullet went in under his eye, smashing up the left side of his head. He turned over and I think this bullet really was enough. However, he made such a row I fired again, breaking his neck. Lowther was about 150 yards to my left and had rather an exciting moment, as he could not see anything, though he heard the animal in the grass after I shot. It was a really splendid male with lovely mane, and our guide, the son of a local sheik, says this particular lion has been well known for a long time in the district, and has killed thirty-four natives, including one of his relatives. It measures just under ten feet from end of tail to nose, and I am quite satisfied at having come now, whatever else I may get or not, as one might come year after year and not get one like him."

This was his first lion, and the above is an extract from a letter written home the same day. To celebrate the occasion they split a bottle—no, a pint of cham-

pagne at the evening meal. Again on January 28, he wrote :

" This was a record day altogether. I left camp at six and walked north-west for two hours and then got on to some fresh rhinoceros tracks, which I followed up for nearly five hours, sometimes going very fast over open ground, and then creeping silently through dense jungle. (I must first tell you that these rhinoceros feed at night, travelling immense distances, and hide and sleep during the day in thick dark places in the jungle, making their way through it in an astonishing manner.) At length we heard a rustling, and there stood two of them, under a tree, not thirty yards off ! I fired with the ten-bore, and away they went like lightning. We ran three or four hundred yards as fast as we could, blood being visible on the ground ; and, after going through some high grass, there they were to my delight, standing in the open. I fired at the wounded one and was glad to see him sink gradually on his knees and turn over. I now noticed the other was much smaller and should have let him off, but he turned nastily on me and, being too big to be a pleasant customer, had to be settled too. The first one turned out to be a ' whopper,' with splendid tusk, so I sent a pony for camels and carried his head into camp, and you shall judge of his size for yourself when we return. It is a great piece of luck, as it is generally very difficult to get near them. On reaching camp I found Lowther returned with two lionesses, which he had tracked for some distance southwards and shot with success. The excitement in camp at night was great ; the men had a sort of war dance, whilst we split another pint."

It will not be necessary to follow day by day the

indefatigable and enthusiastic sportsmen during the ups and downs of their month in this district, nor to enter into the details of their bag, which totalled four rhinoceros, seven lions and numerous smaller game. After several failures, they found the plan of sitting up for lions at night in a tiny zariba near a tied-up donkey an unprofitable amusement, owing to the numerous hyænas and swarms of mosquitos. In fact, so accustomed were they to the fruitless results of these night watches that, on one dark night when Lowther was really visited by five lions, he mistook them for hyænas and drove them away with stones and bad language! After this they gave up the tied donkey, so dear to the heart of native sportsmen, and stalked their game in broad daylight over miles and miles of country, through thick bush and jungle and over scrub-covered plains.

Towards the end of February they were contemplating a speedy return to civilisation when they received news from the coast that a reply to their telegram for more leave had arrived, and an extension to April 30 had been granted. This meant another month of shooting in the best of the season, and great was their joy thereat. Their stay in the Awari and Milmil districts had been interesting from other points of view than shooting—especially as at that time the country was supposed to be under British jurisdiction. The inhabitants were far from being in the enjoyment of *Pax Britannica*, and were at the mercy of alternate parties of Abyssinian and Ogaden Somali raiders. The latter numbered about 300, and spent their time looting camels and killing any villagers who resisted their depredations. The Sheik of Milmil held a difficult "official" situation. He represented the British Government, but was also in the pay of the Abyssinians

for whom he levied tribute and collected sheep from the members of his own tribe, and thus robbed his people for the benefit of strangers and himself. Raids and inter-tribal warfare were so prevalent that sheep and camels were becoming scarce, so men were substituted in their stead, and the prisoners captured were held up to ransom. In former days the tariff for one man's ransom had been a hundred camels, but competition and scarcity had reduced the value of human life by about 90 per cent., and ten camels was now held to be a fair price. The unfortunate prisoners were chained in the villages till their tribe produced the equivalent in camels; and, when the available chains were all in use, the following barbarous device was instituted to expedite matters. Strips of damp camel-hide were sewn tightly round a prisoner's legs just above the ankle, and, as the hide gradually dried up and contracted, the victim usually lost the use of his legs within about a month. This was not an edifying spectacle of the majesty of British law and order, but our prestige was sufficiently acknowledged to prevent Abyssinians and others from shooting at British officers. One night a party of four Abyssinians (not hyænas!) did surround Lowther, as he sat in a zariba waiting for lions, and things looked a bit nasty till they discovered they were dealing with a white man and quietly departed. Indeed, there occurred several minor incidents which required firmness and tact on the part of the young officers to prevent molestation. Yet, on the whole, they were well treated; the meat of the animals they killed proved a great boon to some of the hungry inhabitants and frequently procured them a friendly reception.

On quitting Milmil they preferred to trust their own observation rather than native reports, regarding

localities for game and water and the distances to be traversed; so they made up their minds to skirt the inner edge of the Haud in a north-westerly direction, and march on the Abyssinian hills in the neighbourhood of Harar. They thus journeyed through a land inhabited by tribes who had never beheld a white man though nominally under British protection, and they received several applications for assistance against Abyssinian persecutors, which they wisely declined to entertain. Some years later the Haud and district south of it was handed over to King Menelik by the British Government.

The country presented a totally different aspect as they ascended higher and higher up the southern spurs of the mountains, and the scenery in places was magnificent, with views away eastwards across an open plain to Jigjiga, northward over wooded hills towards Harar, and westward overlooking barren lands which extended to the foot of the mountains of Abyssinia. Turning gradually north and east they descended into the Jigjiga vale, after the commencement of the rains, and devoted many a lengthy tramp to the fresh elephant tracks which they struck but could make nothing of. The elephants were apparently travelling rapidly through this country, and when an elephant is "making his point" he does not tarry by the wayside, so, as Seymour put it, "the covers were all drawn blank," except for lion, lesser koodoo and smaller game.

It was now time to think of the return journey to the coast, and, on studying the map which he had carefully constructed from daily notes, Seymour decided to march straight for Hargeisa near the Khamsa district, thus completing a circle of several hundred miles' length round the northern Haud and

into the interior. To his intense satisfaction on arriving at Hargeisa he found his map* closed on this point almost without error, and was thus amply rewarded for the tedious work of marking up his daily course and taking correct noonday observations, in spite of the sun's high altitude.

They received news at Hargeisa of a serious accident having befallen Lord Delamere, who, with his friend Mr. Mure, was shooting beyond the Haud. A wounded lion charged him; he missed it with both barrels; and the brute seized his foot as he fell backwards. His two *shikaris*, with magnificent courage, hurled themselves on the lion's back, and distracted its attention from Lord Delamere. Their devotion saved his life, but all three were severely mauled, though they afterwards completely recovered from their injuries. Reassured by a satisfactory message regarding this accident, our friends found time for several more days' shooting, and the following is Seymour's graphic account of their last exploit in Somaliland:

"Soon after marching from Arror to return to the coast we found tracks in the plain, and half a mile or so further on, whilst we were all walking together and not the least expecting it, a lioness—the remaining Arror one—broke cover from some bush in front and made off. Lowther and I ran on as hard as we could: I saw him take a tremendous toss over a hole and land, digging his rifle into the ground. The pace was too good to stop to inquire, and he came on again at once. I think we must have covered four or five miles over the plain in the shortest time on record, the lioness being still some way in front.

"My *syce* (groom) 'Aden,' who had gone back for

* His map is reproduced facing page 24.

a pony, arrived at full gallop, taking one good cropper also; he went on in front and rounded up the beast in some scrub most gallantly, all by himself on the pony, just before she reached cover the other side of the plain. She made for him no less than ten times. We heard him shouting at her and came up as quick as we could, Lowther on the right of the bushes and I on the left. I caught sight of her head in the bush and fired, missing her. She went off with a growl to the right, and Lowther had two or three shots, hitting her once high up in the shoulder.

"I thought there were going to be 'ructions,' and, sure enough, out she came, and went straight for Lowther, and his two *shikaris*, who were standing in the open, sixty or seventy yards off. She did not see me, as I was behind a small bush, and passed me at about ten yards, going top speed. I did my best to stop her, but aimed a little too far in front and hit her in the shoulder, under Lowther's shot. This did not hurt her much, though it made an awful mess of her shoulder, and must have stopped her spring. On she went, straight for Lowther, but he stepped aside into a thorn bush, and killed her dead with a shot in the spine just as she seized his second *shikari* by the wrist. It was lucky killing her on the spot. The *shikari* is not much injured. Nur and I were nearly shot by Lowther's other man, who blazed away several times through a cloud of dust after the lioness was dead."

This dramatic incident fittingly closed the Somaliland shooting trip, during which the total bag comprised thirteen lions, four rhinoceros, three big koodoo, thirteen lesser koodoo, five hartebeest and numerous oryx, aul, gerenuk and digdig. The expedition had also developed the spirit of self-reliance and initiative—

SKETCH OF THE ROUTES IN
SOMALI LAND
Travelled by Lts H.C. Lowther & C.F.S. Vandeleur, Scots Guards in 1894.
Note
This sketch was made by Lt C.F.S. Vandeleur from a compass traverse checked by astronomical observations with a six inch sextant.
The Latitudes are single values from sun or star on the meridian.
The Longitudes are obtained from watch error deduced from observations of the sun.
Route from Berbera to Hargeisa and the Longitude of the latter place were taken from Lt H.G.C. Swayne's, maps
The Longitude of Gagaap was taken from the map of Col A. Paget's expedition.
Reference
Route followed shewn thus
Other routes
Latitude station
Longitude station
Wells
Scale
GULF of ADEN
Berbera
Laferug
Mandera
GOLIS RANGE
Sit
Adadle
Shilmale Plain
Berbera to Jalelo
Mt track
Jalelo
Hargeisa
Route
Caravan
Hilly
High ground
Thinly wooded
Dabba Kerin Adad
Country very flat with thin jungle
Khansa Forest
WARSAMA HAD HILL
Open stony ground
Open country
Lat. 9° 34' 32"
Abarso
Long 43° 58' 55"
Lat 9° 51' 36"
Idan
Very bare
A few shrubs and aloes
GAGLBON HILL
Very bare and stony
GUBURRO HILLS
HABR AWAL
Gubile
COCARA HILLS
ROCKS
Undulating, covered with low scrub
Open stony plain
Open plain
Open undulating country, stony: a few trees
JIBRIL ABOKR
Very high ground
Very Mountainous
Very Mountainous Country
Thick jungle with high trees
Debraweyn Valley
To Mt Murgud
To High Hills
STHU HILLS
Walalgu
SAU HILLS
Open undulating country
Very high ground
Very high ground
Walaldon
Haraw Valley
Woody
open
GEBI ABEYA HILL
Well
wooded
Gubile
Dugahameda
KORALI HILL
Ag Jogsi
Very hilly
Dda Dera
CAWA PASS
Open plain
GADABERSI
jungle
Very high ground
High ground
Very high ground
Very hilly
Very Hilly
Thick cactus
Note
DABENDASSA
Very Hilly
Thick cactus
Valley
Nullah
Road to Bulhar
HARGARA HILLS
Wells
Very Hilly
Abisa Dadera
MAKANIS HILL
MAKANIS HILL
Stony, a few trees
HARDA PEAK
Undulating plain
SUBULLO HILL
Open plain
Abyssinian post
Jigjiga
BERTIRI
HARRHE HILL
Harar ?
(Burton's position)
Stony ground, a few trees thorns &c
Fiambiro
KABEL GABET
Kure Dda
Open ground very hilly
No 3
No 2
No 1
High range of Mountains
Undulating open ground a few trees
A few trees
Basera
Ja
Undulating ground; thick jungle in places.
SMALL PEAK
Open
Very Hilly
Jungle
Jungle track
DUBBUR HILL
Abom
ABASGUL OGADEN
Open plain
El Gorura
Thick jungle
BIRDIDO HILLS
MARODI LAMTO HILLS
Coderali
Garodi Jungle
Halji
WEDEL HILL
High ground
RER HIRSI UCAS
Open
Open
Trees
Long Grass
Jungle
Season Valley
Mt GOMBO
2 days to Forso
From Harar
Hilly
Jungle
Very Hilly
Forso
Very good view to N and N.E.
Road to Bulhar
Very hilly and deep ravines
HAWIA
Open
TYULI HILL
Thick jungle
RER ALI OGADEN
Geba Geba
Golwihili
Thick jungle
Long 43° 31' 15"
Dagabur
Thorn Jungle
OGADEN
SEBBATA
WEIN HILL
Jer Jer Ka route to Hargeisa 5 days
Thick jungle
Open plain
Thick jungle
Open plain
Open plain
Open plain
Open grass country
ARROR HILL
WORREIN
Lat. 9° 5' 57"
Arran Arhe
THE HAUD
Gob Maduba
Dawaale
Lat. 8° 36' 10"
High ground
Open plain
Thick jungle
Thick jungle
Lat. 8° 28' 0"
Gelakur
Thick jungle
Dejon
Undulating country; very thick jungle in places.
Jungle
Dushe Mimali
Aware
Fairly open
Jungle
Gaan
High ground
Hogaal
Lat 8° 11' 30"
Gagaap
Mijjiurtu Valley
Native track from Dejon
Native track to Adadle 7 days without water
Scale
MILES 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES
42°
42° 30'
43°
43° 30'
44°
44° 30'
45°
10° 30'
10°
9° 30'
9°
8° 30'
8°

both of them useful qualities in an officer. The map which Vandeleur compiled from his own data is reproduced on the opposite page and, as the country traversed afterwards became the scene of some fighting with the Somaliland Mullah, the survey was of use some years later. Meanwhile the President of the Royal Geographical Society was so well satisfied with the accuracy of the work that he wrote Vandeleur a letter of hearty congratulation and mentioned the circumstance in his annual address to the Society.

The two young officers rejoined the Scots Guards for duty in April, but Vandeleur was so bitten with the life and opportunities which are granted to energetic men in Africa that he volunteered for a period of service with the Uganda Rifles. His application was granted, and on August 10, 1894, at the age of twenty-five, he set out from London on a career of usefulness which was to lead him over thousands of miles of the African continent and bring him distinction wherever he went. One of the secrets of his success was the care he took to study at the Royal Geographical Society's library the work of previous explorers and soldiers in each country he visited. He also took with him every obtainable book which treated of the problems he was to deal with, and read them on the journey out. In this way he acquired a remarkable knowledge of Africa, especially its geography and history, and then used his opportunities to supplement, instead of merely repeating, the experiences of others.

On the same principle I propose to devote a chapter to the story of Uganda, before I introduce the reader to the duties which Vandeleur and others performed in that interesting kingdom.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF UGANDA

See map facing page 66

THE country for which Seymour Vandeleur was now bound and in which he was to gain a first experience of active service, was, in 1894, a new province of the British Empire. Although much had been written about Uganda and East Africa in the newspapers and periodicals of the day, it was mostly of a controversial nature, for at that date our people were not alive to the necessity of British expansion on the African continent. Men's minds were being swayed by two diametrically opposed views, propounded respectively by the enterprising and the over-cautious; those who had penetrated beyond the coast-line and seen for themselves the great possibilities of equatorial Africa endeavoured to persuade our politicians to undertake a forward movement; whereas those who habitually stayed at home and conducted the ordinary affairs of the British Isles persuaded themselves and others to discredit all travellers' tales and to refuse "supplies" for enterprises which might entail future responsibility.

Several years were thus spent in hesitation, during which France and Germany were actively acquiring "colonies" which we had originally discovered: the average Cabinet Minister, of both political parties, considered the African continent a "bore" and an interruption to the accepted game of party politics;

the average newspaper reader, confused by unfamiliar African names and by the heat engendered between rival controversalists, was unable to form a decided opinion.

What was specially wanted by those who were inclined to consider an old problem from a new point of view was definite information regarding the climates, populations and products of these countries; the controversalists were found to lay stress only on those points which best illustrated their particular arguments, and thus made it more difficult for a man who had never been in Africa to understand the problem.

At that time Mr. Chamberlain had not yet initiated his countrymen into his statesmanlike policy of developing backward dependencies on sound business lines. Nigeria was but a dim possibility, an unrecognised Mohammedan Empire. A hostile South Africa threatened the very existence of Greater Britain. The British Empire itself had been but recently "discovered." But fortunately there appeared in 1892 the now well-known work, entitled "England in Egypt," by Sir Alfred Milner. This book ran into five editions in eighteen months and revealed to men of all parties how a bankrupt and undeveloped country had become prosperous and solvent under steady control by British officials. The facts and figures were so lucidly put, the difficulties encountered and the way they were overcome so fairly stated, that even partisans of the Little England school were bound to admit that Lord Cromer was accomplishing a great work on the banks of the Nile. From warm approval arose an honourable desire to persevere in the work and extend its benefits to the Sudan, and it thus gradually dawned on our minds that British rule could be a real blessing to African races, in spite of the drawback of our being

obliged first to establish it with the aid of maxim guns.

Now, the ancient kingdom of Uganda, at the time of Vandeleur's arrival, had not yet been blessed by the process of being "Egyptianised" [administered by native officials controlled by a handful of honest Englishmen], though that has since followed in due course. Nor was very much known about its history and general conditions except from the reports of explorers, who hurried through the various territories of East Africa. But in the year 1902 appeared an admirable work, "The Uganda Protectorate," by Sir Harry Johnston. From it and other sources I now propose to set forth such facts as may help the reader to an understanding of what had taken place in this province prior to the year 1894. We will, therefore, first embark on a short *resumé* of what is known of the native history and origin of the people, describe in a few words the work of the first white men who explored the country; and then follow in detail the doings of Vandeleur during his year and a half in Uganda and Unyoro.

The Protectorate lies around the northern shores of the Victoria Nyanza, and extends from them in a westerly and northerly direction to the Great Congo Forest, to Lake Albert, to the vast marshes south of Fashoda (Egyptian Sudan), and to the shores of Lake Rudolph, on the Abyssinian border. This region, which is governed from the administrative capital, Entebbe, on the Victoria Nyanza, contains a greater variety of climates and a more diversified landscape than are to be found in all the countries which adjoin the Mediterranean seaboard: it is inhabited by populations who vary from one another in appearance, habits, language and spiritual development as greatly as vary the mountaineers of Switzerland and the peas-

ants of Italy from the fishermen of Malta and the grandees of Spain, while animal and vegetable life is simply bewildering in its profusion. The mountains of Ruwenzori (20,000 ft. high) contain glaciers which rival those of the Alps; the dismal swamps of the Nile Valley cover ten thousand square miles of land; and between such extremes the type of inhabitant and species of plant is necessarily of the greatest variety. There are large areas within the temperate zone, at altitudes between six and seven thousand feet, where a magnificent country and healthy climate will some day afford a home to perhaps half a million white inhabitants from Europe; although the first settlers may suffer from fevers and other hardships, these will in course of time be overcome by industry and applied knowledge. For it may be fairly claimed as a scientific fact that the lengthened residence of white inhabitants tends to sanitate a virgin soil and banish injurious microbes from it: it is on record that fevers and agues were rife in Great Britain when this country was as undrained as are the uplands of Uganda; and the experience of India has shown that whereas in the eighteenth century British soldiers died like flies, in the nineteenth we maintained an army of 72,000 white men there in healthy conditions.

Sir Harry Johnston* in his careful study of the natives (they beheld a white man for the first time in 1862) gives cogent reasons for believing that the aboriginal inhabitants were the pygmies, whose descendants still lurk in parts of the Great Congo Forest and

* To readers who would investigate the numerous charms and drawbacks of a residence in Uganda, Sir H. Johnston's entertaining descriptions may be warmly recommended—see his "Uganda Protectorate" (two vols.), published by Hutchinson & Co., Paternoster Row, in 1902, and profusely illustrated.

other remote spots. These dwarfs appear to be as closely related to the chimpanzee monkey as it is possible for human beings to be, and the affinity is so far recognised by the chimpanzee of the present day that there are stories current of pygmy women being carried away by male monkeys and destroyed by their jealous wives.

In course of time the original monkey-like pygmies were absorbed by intermarriage into a race of black people, which apparently spread itself over the whole of equatorial Africa. The theory is that these negroes were driven by famine and the encroaching sands of the Sahara desert from the north-west corner of the continent : and there is little doubt that at a remote period of the past the Sahara was a fertile and thickly populated land, instead of the howling wilderness of sand which it has since become. But there are no indications by which we can compute even the approximate date of this displacement of pygmies by negroes, and all that can be averred is that it must have occurred in the dim ages before the rise of Ancient Egypt. What is very interesting is that certain small colonies of pygmies have survived into the twentieth century, and that we have got into personal relations with them.

The centuries succeeded one another, and in course of time Egypt and Abyssinia became the abode of a semi-white population of Caucasian extraction, which settled down amidst the local blacks and intermarried with them. A superior race was thus produced on the banks of the Nile, designated Ancient Egyptians, and in the mountains of Abyssinia, called Galas. By the light of recent research we are able to trace the history of the Ancient Egyptians back through sixty centuries from the present time, and there is evidence to show that the Galas, who still preserve a distinct

nationality, are descended from the same stock. There is also good reason to believe that an offshoot of these Galas moved southwards to the Victoria Nyanza by way of Lake Rudolf, and settled themselves as masters over the mixed race of negroes and pygmies already alluded to. Such is the conjecture which may be hazarded as to the origin of the kingdom of Uganda and the aristocracy which rules it, and it may be interesting to mention here in a few words such evidence as is available to support the theory. On the Ancient Egyptian bas-reliefs are depicted a type of man which exactly resembles the pygmies already mentioned, and resembles no other living type : these same old bas-reliefs also reproduce the chimpanzees of equatorial Africa with marked fidelity ; and it is not assuming too much to suppose that the powerful dynasties, which ruled Egypt sixty centuries ago and under whose rule science and commerce flourished in a high degree, were capable of sending expeditions up the Nile in search of knowledge and trade. There is indeed no doubt that the builders of the Great Pyramids and Temples of Egypt were well acquainted with the Nile sources and with many other things which were rediscovered in the nineteenth century. At any rate the domestic animals and the few imported plants which now flourish in Uganda can be distinctly traced to Egyptian originals ; the remarkable long-horned cattle of the lake regions might have stood last year for their portraits on the Egyptian frescoes ; the musical instruments, especially the harps, of the Bahima aristocracy of Uganda, are exactly like those engraven on the ancient monuments : the idea of the " planked " canoe seems also to have been borrowed from the same source, in spite of the fact that the rivers and lakes of central Africa require boats of different construction

to those employed on the Nile below Assouan; and finally we can see for ourselves the close resemblance between the faces and complexions of the Bahima of Uganda and the present Fellaheen of Egypt, the type so accurately sculptured on the temples.

In course of time the purer blooded Bahima women, perhaps owing to the change of climate, ceased to bear children, and the original Gala blood was grafted on the indigenous black stock. This blend of pygmy, negro and Gala evolved in course of time a race of men who organised Uganda and the adjacent States into powerful kingdoms. The race enjoyed a life of culture and progress in comparison with the existence of the naked folk around them—steeped in the degradations of the stone ages. The known genealogy of the Uganda sovereigns includes thirty-seven consecutive rulers, and we may fairly assume that the kingdom and its neighbours have been settled communities for over five centuries under dynasties of Gala origin.

But though superior to their neighbours let it not be supposed that law and order predominated; on the contrary, massacres of every sort were the rule rather than the exception, and it is quite likely that whilst Agincourt (1415) was claiming a death-roll of over 11,000 men killed, an equally bloody though unrecorded battle may have been taking place between Uganda and Unyoro. Such contests were the rule with short intervals until *Pax Britannica* put a stop to them at the end of the nineteenth century.

However, one sign of the superiority of the Baganda compared with their neighbours was their habit from time immemorial of clothing themselves in long garments made with great skill from the bark of the birch tree—an art which they must have acquired for themselves, as they had, up to 1850, no knowledge of

the outer world beyond a vague legend of their Abyssinian descent. To them the universe was comprised within the region bordered by the Great Congo Forest, the Nile marshlands, the heights of Mount Elgon, the Nandi and Mau plateaus, and Lake Tanganika; nor had even a whisper of their existence reached Europe until after Queen Victoria had been twenty years on the throne. We now know that during the first half of the nineteenth century some enterprising Muskat Arabs traded in sailing-boats between British India and the Zanzibar coast; that some of them pushed caravans into the interior in pursuit of new markets for their goods; and that in this manner they discovered Lake Nyassa and the country of Unyamwezi—known to Herodotus (B.C. 450), by hearsay, as the Land of the Moon, now situated in German East Africa. The Arabs appear to have reached the south-eastern shores of the Victoria Nyanza during the forties and there heard rumours of negro kingdoms to the north but,

"the first stranger from the outer world to penetrate into Uganda was a Beluch soldier from Zanzibar, named Isa, who fled from his creditors, first to the Arab trading settlements, and finally to the court of Suna, King of Uganda, where he arrived about 1849–1850. His handsome face and abundant hair and beard won him royal favour. Known as *The Hairy One*, he became a power in Uganda, and possessed a harêm of three hundred women. Through Isa the Beluch, Uganda first heard of a world of Arabs and white men beyond their own borders. Suna sent word to the Arab traders inviting them to his court. Sheikh Snay bin Amir was the first to accept. In 1852 this Arab trader stood in the presence of the most powerful king of the best-organised East African State then

existing, untouched by Arab or European influence. He remained some time with Suna, gave him much information about the world outside the Victoria Nyanza, and even beyond the coast of Africa. From him Suna and the Baganda had confirmation of the stories of Isa. They learned that there really were white men. The Bahima who had formed the aristocracies and dynasties of these regions remembered in their traditions a time when they were of much lighter complexion and of longer hair than they possessed since their lingering with the negresses of the subject races. They were much struck by these stories of white men, and regarded them as the stock from which they themselves had sprung. They therefore manifested a certain fear lest the white men from the lands of their forefathers might be coming to conquer these fertile countries from the grasp of their blackened descendants. Snay bin Amir brought back with him full accounts of this organised and civilised negro kingdom. This news spread rapidly amongst the trading Arabs of the Zanzibar hinterland, and came to the ears of the German missionary, Krapf, who with Rebmann was doing much to bring to our knowledge the names and features of inner East Africa."*

In consequence of these reports Captain (afterwards Sir Richard) Burton proceeded to the discovery of Lake Tanganika, accompanied by Captain Speke; and the latter, with more enterprise than Burton, headed an ill-equipped expedition and discovered the great lake which he named Victoria Nyanza. Speke at the same time gathered certain information about Uganda and Unyoro, which prompted him a few years later, accompanied by Grant, to undertake a

* "Uganda Protectorate."

famous journey. They made their way without difficulty to the Victoria Nyanza, then round its western shore, and thus reached Uganda in 1862. Suna was dead and his son, Mutesa, had been five years on the throne. He received Speke and Grant with great cordiality and took such a lively interest in their desire to discover the sources of the Nile that he volunteered to show them the spot where that river issues out of the Victoria Nyanza at the Ripon Falls. This was accordingly done, and Speke was so favourably impressed by the hospitality of the black king and the intelligence and veracity of the Baganda generally that he planned his further route upon the information they gave him. Subsequent exploration has confirmed what the Baganda told Speke, who followed the Nile downstream, cut off a bend of the river which otherwise would have led him into the Albert Nyanza, and reached Gondokoro without discovering that lake. There he met Baker and his plucky wife travelling in the opposite direction whilst he continued his homeward journey down the Nile to Khartoum. Speke seems throughout his travels to have possessed a happy gift of rightly understanding the geography of the areas he crossed, though critics declared he took too much for granted. His assumptions were subjected to some destructive criticism, especially by his rival Burton, whose hostile pen reduced the Victoria Nyanza to an unwholesome marsh and supported Livingstone's wild theory of the sources of the Nile. So Speke was unrewarded by the British Government, though later research has re-established his reputation and private enterprise has erected a memorial to him in Hyde Park. His companion Grant was given a C.B. in recognition of some small services rendered in connection with the abortive

Abyssinian expedition, and a Knighthood was very properly bestowed on Baker, who discovered the lake which Speke just missed.

Baker's explorations in Unyoro should be read at first hand in his fascinating volume "Ismailia"; he and his wife were nearly killed by order of the king of that country, who was by no means so friendly as the Uganda king had shown himself to Speke and Grant. During the dozen years which followed the events just narrated European interest in the Nile sources was concentrated on Livingstone's theories and work in the Congo country. He clung obstinately to the idea that the sources of the River Congo were the sources of the Nile, and, after being gallantly rescued by the new explorer, Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Stanley, at once returned to Lake Bangweolo, where he died.

The impression left on men's minds by the antagonistic theories of Burton, Speke, Baker and Livingstone, was one of apathetic indifference until Stanley appeared on the scene. No one in the history of modern exploration in Africa has surpassed this great man in the qualities of courage, intelligence and tenacity of purpose; and it is sincerely to be hoped that the petty controversies which for a time raged round his name are by now forgotten. We are gradually learning that the kid-gloved gentry who have so much to say about everything in these islands are not the sort who usually conduct great enterprises to successful issue in Africa or elsewhere; and Stanley will be remembered for what he did, not for what was said of him. He was employed by the proprietors of the *New York Herald* and the London *Daily Telegraph* to solve the problems which were in doubt—was there really a Victoria Nyanza? and, if so, did the Nile flow out of it? Were there several lakes or only some marshes?

Were the headstreams of the Nile identical with those of the Congo? Such were the questions which the two newspaper proprietors sent Stanley to solve, and he did solve them. That a geographical problem of such magnitude should be settled through the enterprise of two daily newspapers is an honourable record in the history of journalism.

Stanley followed Speke's old road through Unyamwezi to the Victoria Nyanza, where he put together a boat and circumnavigated the inland sea.

"In 1875 he reached Uganda, to be received by the same Mutesa who had received Speke.* Mutesa was puzzled about religious matters. Stanley's conversations inclined him favourably towards Christianity. At this opportune moment there arrived in Uganda one of Gordon's messengers, or (if one may say so without unpleasantness) spies—Linant de Bellefonds, a Belgian, who in reality had come to see whether Uganda was worth the conquering, and whether it was too tough a job to tackle. Stanley resolved to write his famous letter to the *Daily Telegraph* inviting English missionaries to proceed to the evangelisation of Uganda. He had no means of sending this letter back to Europe save by way of the Nile, and Linant de Bellefonds volunteered to take it. As the unfortunate Belgian was travelling down the Nile in the vicinity of Gondokoro, his expedition was attacked by the Bari, who had suffered great wrongs at the hands of Nubian slave-traders. Linant de Bellefonds was murdered and his corpse thrown on the bank, to lie there rotting in the sun. An Egyptian expedition, sent to inquire into the cause of this attack and to punish the Bari, recovered Linant de Bellefonds' body,

* "Uganda Protectorate."

and removed therefrom the long knee-boots which he was wearing at the time of his death. In one of the boots—he had tucked it between boot and leg at the time of the attack—was found Stanley's famous letter to the missionaries. This was sent on to Gordon Pasha at Khartoum and forwarded by him to the *Daily Telegraph*, with an explanation of the circumstances under which it had been found.

"The letter, when published, met with an immediate response. Before many months were over (perhaps less than a year after Stanley had issued the appeal from far Uganda,) the first party of Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society had started in two sections for Uganda. One half went by way of Zanzibar, the other went up the Nile. Both met in Uganda, and the establishments of the Church Missionary Society, which were destined after extraordinary vicissitudes to result in an immensely successful propaganda, commenced their work in 1877. Truly Stanley's letter, the blood-stained sheet of paper found in the boot of the murdered de Bellefonds, was big with fateful results for the kingdom of Uganda.

"The excitement caused by this bold step on the part of the Anglican propaganda roused attention at Rome, or rather, struck the imagination and intelligence of a remarkable prelate of the Roman Catholic Church—Bishop (afterwards Cardinal) Lavigerie who, as Bishop of Algiers, had founded the Mission of the White Fathers, a body of ardent missionaries who were to imitate the Arabs in their dress, to lead in many respects an Arab life and thus convert Northern Africa and the inhabitants of the Sahara to the Christian faith. The views of Cardinal Lavigerie were perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, as much political as religious, and he yearned to acquire fresh territory,

not only for his Church, but for his own nation, France. Resolved that the British missionaries should not have it all their own way in Central Africa, he despatched his White Fathers to the Victoria Nyanza and Uganda on the one hand, to the Zanzibar coast and Tanganika on the other."

The White Fathers of course came into rivalry, both religious and political, with the Anglican missionaries already established, and on one occasion had a quarrel at Divine worship—when King Mutesa is reported to have exclaimed: "Go! And, when you white men have decided on the true religion, it will be time enough to come and teach it to us."

He died in 1884 and was succeeded by his son Mwanga, a youth of such vicious tastes that even the Mohammedans, who are not too particular, joined with the native Christians to expel him. Mwanga fled across the lake, took refuge with the White Fathers, declared himself a Catholic convert, and by this means regained his throne some years later.

Meanwhile a more direct route from the coast was discovered by Joseph Thomson who, starting from Mombasa with an expedition organised by the Royal Geographical Society, made his way to the north-east corner of the Victoria Nyanza. He discovered the snow mountain Kenya, Lake Baringo and Mount Elgon and traversed the country through which the railway now runs. During these years Great Britain was fortunately represented at the Court of the Sultan of Zanzibar by Sir John Kirk, who was alive to the probable future value of the countries we are dealing with. He exerted his influence to keep the coast and its hinterland towards the great lakes open to Arab and British enterprise, although he was unable

to remove the apathy which appears inherent in British Governments, he persuaded the Royal Society and British Association to combine to send a scientific expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro. This expedition was commanded by Mr. (now Sir Harry) Johnston, who concluded " treaties which very nearly brought the whole of that mountain within the British sphere and which at any rate were the basis from which the Imperial British East Africa Company sprang."

By this time the partition of Africa amongst the great Powers of Europe was in full swing, and Great Britain, in spite of the enterprise of her sons in their individual capacity, was being left completely out of the scramble, because the politicians by whom we were ruled were unaware that foreign Governments had deliberately set to work to acquire and enclose vast slices of the continent. This is not the place to discuss the general policy of successive Governments on the question ; nor what might have been the result of more forethought on their part. The general impression left on the mind of a student is that British Cabinets had no policy at all, but allowed matters to drift and muddle along until some influential newspaper vehemently goaded them into action. Then a spasmodic effort, usually too late, was made on behalf of our legitimate interests ; and thus Uganda, Nigeria, the Sudan, Nyassaland and the Transvaal each in turn, and each without due forethought, became for a brief period a " Vital British Interest."

There were already many international jealousies regarding the allotment of East Africa. Our friends the Germans viewed with considerable jealousy any transference of the Egyptian Sudan or Uganda to the British sphere of influence. When Stanley was about to start on his famous journey in relief

of Emin Pasha on the Upper Nile, the Germans positively refused permission for his expedition to pass through their territory. As the route *via* Mombasa and Uganda was at that time unsafe, Stanley was obliged to take the Congo route to Equatoria. He brought away Emin, discovered Ruwenzori and Lake Albert Edward and in a measure increased the British claims to consider these territories within a British sphere of influence: but his expedition suffered ghastly hardships in consequence of the German attitude.

In June, 1890, an Anglo-German Convention fixed the boundaries of the respective spheres of influence, and the British East Africa Company, under Sir William Mackinnon, pushed its officials inland to make treaties with the chiefs of the country within the British sphere. That a convention signed by the highest authorities in London and Berlin was necessary and timely will be denied by no one who has made himself acquainted with the incident of Dr. Karl Peters. He was a go-ahead German traveller, not employed by his Government, but ready for any enterprise during his travels. In 1889 Mr. F. J. Jackson, an official, was to the north of the Victoria Nyanza engaged in negotiations with the King of Uganda regarding a British Protectorate. The negotiations came to nothing, so he went to Mount Elgon, leaving his standing camp and servants to await his return in the British sphere. Meanwhile a bundle of letters arrived for Mr. Jackson from the coast. At this juncture Dr. Karl Peters marched into the camp, obtained the letters, opened and read them, and at once determined to steal a march on Jackson by going himself to Uganda and forestalling the British Protectorate over that country. He so far succeeded that

he drew up a treaty with the aid of the French Catholic priests and procured for Germany a Protectorate over Uganda. This treaty was afterwards disavowed by the German Government and had no effect. One does not blame the attempt of a German to secure a German Protectorate—an enterprise quite as defensible as the similar attempts of Englishmen; but that the opening and reading of another man's correspondence is unscrupulous, few will be found to deny.

During the year 1890 Captain (now General Sir Frederick) Lugard went up as the accredited agent of the Company and most thoroughly did he justify his selection for the post. He was met on arrival in Uganda by a serious situation, needing firmness and promptitude to deal with it. The native government of the country was at a standstill, owing to the iniquities of Mwanga. Civil war was raging between the Anglicans and Catholics, and this was further complicated by frequent incursions of Mohammedans. Lugard first ensured his position by arranging a treaty with Mwanga, declaring Uganda to be under the protection of the Chartered Company. He then very wisely built a fort near the capital, and it was no sooner finished that it was attacked by Mwanga's adherents. He repulsed this attack, but also realised that nothing could be done by him or any one else without a reliable military force at his back. He therefore resolved on the bold project of proceeding to the west of Lake Albert and taking over all the remaining Sudanese soldiers of Emin's province. In this he was completely successful, and obtained some 400 professional soldiers who were independent of local factions, and thus laid the foundation of the force which enabled us later on to start British rule in the country. These Sudanese became the Uganda Rifles which performed

such useful service during a number of years and ultimately became merged into the King's African Rifles, lately on active service in Somaliland. By thus retrieving the scattered bands of Sudanese, under their own officers, Lugard imported an element of power which only needed careful control and judicious handling to be the effective instrument of civilised government. To have left them to roam the country and prey upon its inhabitants would have produced great disorders in the near future, and the fact that these troops mutinied in 1897, under great provocation, should not detract from our appreciation of Lugard's decision to employ them. He could do nothing without some military force: to have used the Protestant converts against the Catholics, or the Mohammedan Baganda against their Christian fellow countrymen, would have been a direct encouragement to civil war: and at the period we are considering it would not have been possible to transport an Indian battalion to the interior. It was Lugard who really made Uganda a possible British possession, and did it with inconceivably small resources. It is well to emphasise his feat, and to recollect that England does not always recognise the sons who serve her best. His personal influence over the natives had been such that when Mr. Grogan made his journey from the Cape to Cairo in 1899, he found he could get the natives of Toro to do anything for him because he knew Kapelli, the local name for Lugard. "They asked all kinds of questions about Kapelli, and wanted to know why he had never come back, and had the English deserted their country after promising to protect them? To have left a name in Africa that opens all hearts is the finest monument to his exploits that a man can have."

Lugard was not only successful in laying the first firm foundation upon which a British administration of the country could be started ; but he also succeeded in the far more difficult task of persuading Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet to consider the whole East African problem from an Imperial point of view. It is true that this Cabinet did not definitely establish a protectorate ; but it refused to abandon what had been gained for the Empire, and consented to send out a Commission, under Sir Gerald Portal, to " report and advise."

Now, the question really at stake, when shorn of its various side-issues, was whether the British Government or the Chartered Company should build a railway from the coast to the Victoria Nyanza ? for this railway must inevitably be built whether Uganda remained a commercial sphere of influence or became a protectorate. To attempt to hold and administer on a permanent basis a country to which every load must be carried 800 miles on men's heads was out of the question ; in fact we shall see when we deal in detail with Vandeleur's work how hazardous the task was during the years the railway was in course of construction.

Sir Gerald Portal's Commission of Inquiry practically took over the government of Uganda ; Sir Gerald himself unfortunately died of typhoid, and Colonel (now Major-General Sir Henry) Colvile acted as Commissioner and concluded the treaty which created the Uganda Protectorate.

Meanwhile, the Chartered Company decided that it could not afford to build the railway ; it therefore announced its intention of surrendering its Charter and retiring from East Africa. After much hesitation and delay, the Imperial Government resolved to take

over the country and construct the railway at British expense. Those of us who are convinced that in Uganda we have laid solid foundations upon which in due time a great Negro State will arise, must applaud this decision ; the initial cost has been heavy for railway construction and civil and military adminstration and there is up to the present no return on the outlay ; in fact a further small annual expenditure by Great Britain will be necessary for ten years. The figures had better be faced, and they are faced by Sir Harry Johnston in his chapter on commercial prospects. He computes the total amount of money which will have been spent by the British taxpayer in East Africa and Uganda between the years 1894 and 1911 at the round sum of £10,500,000. For this sum he is convinced that we shall have started a great Negro State, or a series of smaller Negro States on a self-supporting basis ; and he most properly urges that, as they become prosperous under our rule and through the agency of our railway, the capital sum expended on them should be consolidated into a national debt upon which interest should be paid to the mother country. If, as is quite likely, both Uganda and East Africa develop into wealthy communities they could easily shoulder the debt which has been contracted on their behalf by Great Britain, and thus a great impetus will be given to the statesmanlike policy of pledging British credit to develop other backward possessions.

CHAPTER III

SOLDIERING IN UGANDA

See map facing page 66

THE intention in the last chapter was to place before the reader some account of the chief events in the history of Uganda up to the moment when Lieutenant Seymour Vandeleur and other officers began their task on behalf of the British Government. Strictly speaking, the name "Uganda" belongs only to one of the dozen nations within our sphere in East Africa; whereas "Uganda Protectorate" is the official title of the several provinces (including Unyoro) which cluster around the shores of the great lakes. That part of the country through which the railway passes from the coast of the Indian Ocean to the Victoria Nyanza is called the "East African Protectorate." These two British protectorates are under separate administrations, now controlled by the Colonial Office in London.

When Colonel Colvile was appointed Commissioner a certain number of young officers were selected to go out and command the Sudanese soldiery under him, and Seymour Vandeleur was one of them. He reached Mombasa on September 6, 1894, in company with Mr. Jackson and Captain Ashburnham, 60th Rifles. The walls of the fort, thirty feet high and dating back to 1594, still mounted the ancient guns which remind the world of Portugal's adventurous colonists of the sixteenth century. A steam launch landed the party

at a spot ten miles up the river, where they prepared for their eight hundred miles tramp to the Victoria Nyanza. It was the middle of the dry season and the necessity of carrying water for the caravan of four hundred porters for the journey across the Taru Desert added considerably to the difficulties of the march.

On September 25, they reached a station of the Scottish Industrial Mission, a delightful spot 3070 feet above sea level, where they perceived what a Scotsman can do to a swamp in Africa. By artificial means it had been transformed into a clear stream of water flowing through a garden growing all kinds of plants and vegetables. Dr. Charters was the head of this station, and his friend Mr. Colquhoun was paying him a visit. Accordingly next day these two gentlemen accompanied Vandeleur's caravan six miles along their forward march, said good-bye and branched off to their shooting camp which had been arranged for previously. From that day to this they were never again seen or heard of, dead or alive. Numerous causes have been hazarded to account for their disappearance, such as lions, dearth of water, Masai warriors ; but the matter still remains a mystery, and the curious thing is that Dr. Charters was perfectly well acquainted with the country and had been to the same spot to shoot on a former occasion. The caravan under Mr. Jackson's leadership proceeded on its way, and on October 5 arrived at a station named Machakos, 5400 feet above the sea and situated in the highlands of East Africa, where the days are clouded and cool and it is a pleasure to live.

At last they descended into the district bordering the Victoria Nyanza, and Vandeleur beheld for the first time the blue waters of the great inland sea which it had long been his ambition to reach. The country

was rich in magnificent banana plantations and a numerous population clothed in bark cloth. The journey of 800 miles came to an end on November 28, when they reached Entebbe, the headquarters of the Administration and reported themselves to Colonel Colvile, who had built a charming house on a cliff overhanging the lake.

At the date of Vandeleur's arrival the mail from London to Entebbe took over three months: it now takes less than one. Here he met Major (now Colonel) Cunningham, C.B., D.S.O. who became his commanding officer and remained his intimate friend during the rest of his life. They were to be much thrown together; first on active service in Uganda, next in Nigeria and finally in South Africa. Their first duty was to proceed to Unyoro and undertake a reconnaissance across Lake Albert and down the Nile to its furthest navigable point.

Fever was prevalent amongst the Europeans at this time and Vandeleur had frequent bouts of it; Cunningham was also down, but he pluckily decided to march on December 19, and they accordingly started for Unyoro, taking their ponies with them. These horses were the first to make the journey and it was doubtful whether they would reach the end of it. Swamps were the main difficulty, for at that time they were not crossed by the causeways and bridges which have since been constructed under British supervision. Vandeleur's pony most frequently got into trouble, as it lost its head, plunged madly into the reeds and sank up to its neck in water. But even to a man who does not lose his head, the Unyoro road presented features which one would not select for an afternoon stroll. Now clutching hold of the papyrus at the side, now stepping from one lump of vegetation

to another, one tries in vain to save oneself from sinking deeper into the quagmire of mud and water. Yet in spite of these gymnastics under a tropical sun, perhaps in consequence of them, both Cunningham and Vandeleur were quite fit.

At the end of three days they reached Fort Raymond, where Captain Dunning, D.S.O., commanded; and eight days later (January 1, 1895) arrived at Fort Hoima, the headquarters in Unyoro, where they stayed only a week. As they proceeded towards Lake Albert the country became more open until suddenly from the edge of a precipitous escarpment 1200 feet high they beheld the great sheet of water, bordered by a strip of yellow sand.

The diminutive expedition embarked in a twenty-foot steel boat which had been carried in sections by porters from the coast; the two officers, eight Sudanese and eight Zanzibaris with tents, baggage, one maxim, the sail and eight oars, filled up the boat, so that crossing the lake in a squall required careful trimming. After reaching the western shore in safety and skirting it for a whole day, they came to the village of Amat, where Lake Albert narrows to 600 yards and becomes the White Nile. The following day was spent in rowing and sailing down the river, which soon became so rapid that the boat drifted at a goodly pace and its occupants realised that they would be in a nasty predicament if attacked and compelled to retreat against the stream. At Wadelai they encamped on the site of Emin Pasha's old fort, now completely overgrown by vegetation. Dervishes were reported at the Dufile cataracts, and it would have been a sad day for Cunningham and Vandeleur if they had been captured and sent to Omdurman to join Slatin Pasha and the other prisoners of the Khalifa, especially as

there was at that time no prospect of a British advance into the Sudan!

On January 14 the old fort at Dufile was reached, situated above the Cataract, with parapet and ditches still distinctly traced and some lemon trees and cotton bushes the only remaining signs of Egyptian occupation. Cunningham and Vandeleur were the first white men to revisit this spot since its abandonment in November, 1888. In that month the Dervishes penetrated into the station after three days' fighting and a successful night attack, as described by Cassati (an Italian), who was present. Cunningham concluded a treaty with the local chief, who reported the Dervishes to be in possession of the country beyond the rapids; and the British flag was hoisted on both banks of the Nile. It now flies on the right bank only.

The expedition had reached the furthest navigable point. Below the Cataract the river is a seething torrent, fifty yards broad, beyond which foaming rapids succeed one another at intervals to Lado, 120 miles from Dufile. From Lado to Khartoum are 900 miles of open water-way, now navigated by modern steamers under the British and Egyptian flags. After verifying native reports of the Dervish strength and surveying the course of the Nile, the two officers had accomplished all that was expected of them; they accordingly returned to Unyoro in order to take up more pressing work in that province.

In one way Vandeleur was fortunate in the date of his arrival on the waters of the Upper Nile, which were destined during the five ensuing years to be opened up from the north, south and west. At the date of his journey the Khalifa was still in full power at Omdurman and the people of Great Britain had hardly realised that there was work to be done on

the African continent. It was Vandeleur's privilege to take an active part in all this work, but he was also a thinker; and this is what he wrote in 1897 (the date is important) concerning the Upper Nile:

"It is towards Fashoda that French expeditions are now hurrying, both from the French Congo on the west, a journey of 2000 miles *via* the Ubangi and Mbomu rivers, and from Abyssinia on the east. Two years ago (1895) Semio, an advanced post on the Mbomu river, was occupied; and latterly a further advance has been made across the watershed between the Congo and the Nile, to Dem Zibehr, a distance of 180 miles, and a small post established at Tambura (under M. Liotard) on the Sue river 170 miles to the east, without opposition on the part of the natives. The post is, of course, isolated, and necessary supplies have to be transported all this long distance from the base, but the fact remains that the French are now on the watershed of the Nile, and they need find no difficulty—except in the matter of transport and food—in establishing themselves at Meshra-el-Rek, even if they have not reached that place already. Junker journeyed from the latter place to Dem Zibehr by Jur Ghattas in nineteen days, through the country inhabited by the Dinkas. It is reported that a large and well-armed expedition, composed of men of the Foreign Legion and *tirailleurs Sénégalais*, all starting from Semio under Captain Marchand—supported by four other officers—is to co-operate with that under M. Liotard at Dem Zibehr, and is carrying a small steel gun-boat with it. The difficulties in the way of transporting such a vessel a distance of over 300 miles are very great, as we have seen in trying to transport a steamer in sections to the Victoria Nyanza from the

east coast. Although the Bahr-el-Ghazal province is peopled by some of the most warlike races in the Sudan and supplies the best recruits for the Sudanese battalions, there is no cohesion among them and they recognise no single ruler or head. This fact will make the French advance easier, as no organised opposition on a large scale will be met with. The majority of the natives are not fanatical Mohammedans. The other expedition from the east, under the Marquis de Bonchamps who is taking with him an escort of armed Abyssinians, had, in July 1897, reached Goré, close to the place where Captain Bottégo was killed four months before, joining here an expedition under another Frenchman, Captain Clochette, who has since died. They went on from here to the Didessa river, which flows into the Blue Nile. Besides experiencing transport difficulties they were beginnng to suffer from desertions on the part of their men.

" One can but admire the enterprise of these French officers in leading their perilous expeditions ; but what does it all mean, and why should the French be pushing on with such speed into what is clearly regarded as the Anglo-Egyptian sphere of influence in the Nile valley, remote as it is from their own territories in Africa ? "

The above quotation, which so prophetically foretold what was actually to happen at Fashoda in August, 1898, is taken from Vandeleur's book, " Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger " ; there is, however, reason to believe that he had put the case even more plainly in his original manuscript, the proofs of which were submitted to the Foreign Office before publication. But what has been quoted above is after all sufficient to show that our Foreign Office had ample warning of impending events ; and it is futile to plead

on its behalf that there was no reliable evidence of the aggression with which the French menaced us on the Upper Nile. But a deaf ear was turned to the warning, with the result that 130 black soldiers under Major Marchand caused the British Empire to mobilise its fleets and prepare for war in all parts of the world, no insignificant performance for a major of marines and a handful of blacks. The French gave way directly they realised that our Government and people meant business in the Fashoda incident, but why, one asks, did not the French Government realise beforehand that we should stand firm and hold by our rights on the Nile ?

The reply seems to be that British Governments had shirked imperial responsibilities for so many years that the French had every reason to believe we should give way on the Nile, as we had done at other places. European nations were all equally surprised at the firmness we displayed after we found Marchand at Fashoda. It was a revelation to them to see us give up pusillanimity and maintain our rights ; and yet it is surely the business of a wise diplomacy to enlighten continental Cabinets as to the questions we deem vital to our interests, and to do this before instead of after the mobilisation of the Channel Fleet. On the other hand it may fairly be claimed that our menace of war had a more potent effect than any diplomatic representations.

However that may be, let us at any rate recognise that the French officers in Africa did not muddle along and trust everything to chance. Every detail of their adventurous scheme was carefully thought out and arranged for : it took them about three years to organise the expedition from the west coast and the expedition from the east coast which were to meet

at the confluence of the Sobat river and the Nile. The expedition from Abyssinia was numerous and well armed, but Menelik refused to entrust it to any commander but an Abyssinian. Two Frenchmen and an officer of the Russian Guards accompanied it and gave advice; but the Ras commanded, and being a true son of the highlands, he would have nothing to do with boats of any sort. The Abyssinians consequently suffered frightful hardships in the Sobat marshes and many died in the unaccustomed climate; nevertheless they reached the junction of the Nile and Sobat in July, 1898, and planted the Abyssinian flag. But the Ras was furious because he did not find Marchand and the French waiting for him at the *rendezvous*, as had been promised, so he at once retired to Abyssinia, in spite of the entreaties of his three European friends. All they could do under such circumstances was to write a letter explaining the cause of their retreat, place it in a bottle, and tie the bottle to a long pole which they erected at the place of *rendezvous*. The Abyssinians would not consent to wait even one day for their allies. Only ten days later Marchand arrived from the west, found the letter in the bottle tied to the pole and at once sent Captain Baratier in the steamer *Faidherbe* up the Sobat to bring back the Abyssinians. But the current was strong, progress against it was slow, and the Abyssinians had been in a desperate hurry to get home. Owing to the marshes along the Sobat they moved at a considerable distance from the river; so, though Baratier accomplished a remarkable journey of 250 miles up-stream, he never came in touch with those he was seeking. This was a bitter disappointment to Marchand, as the scheme of uniting French and Abyssinian territory on the Nile was the essential feature of his plan for severing the

Egyptian Sudan from Uganda and cutting the Cape to Cairo line for ever.

It may perhaps interest my readers to know that, as soon as Marchand quitted our territory in 1898, I traced the routes both of the Abyssinians and of Baratier up the Sobat and am in possession of a "letter of protection" bestowed by the French officer on one local chief and of a silk Abyssinian flag which was forced on another chief. This digression into the Fashoda incident, and the admirable forethought which Vandeleur brought to bear on it before the event, will illustrate better than pages of biography how intimately he was acquainted with events in Equatorial Africa. We will now return to the year 1895 and to the practical work in which he was engaged.

On reaching the fort at Hoima, news arrived that Kabarega, King of Unyoro, was on the warpath with 1200 men, raiding the country for slaves and loot; and that one or two Arab caravans were importing arms and ammunition for various predatory local chiefs. The curious thing was that the natives were generally in league with these caravans, although the result of importing arms was invariably to cause slave-raids on a large scale, with the usual loss of life and liberty to themselves! Even in kingdoms like Unyoro and Uganda, which had been more or less organised for centuries, the people had no collective interests: one tribe would attack its neighbour solely because it felt strong enough to ensure success: a village would likewise prey upon another village of the same tribe. Amid this welter of strife there could be no mutual confidence between man and man, nor an organised party hostile to slavery: it was only when some exceptionally capable man arose in the shape of a king or witch-doctor that the natives banded them-

selves together for concerted action: and this was usually brought about with the object of enslaving the neighbourhood. Such were the normal conditions of society previous to the advent of Englishmen, and the numerous expeditions sent against Kabarega and others arose from the necessity of stopping slave raids. In these expeditions the backbone consisted of the Sudanese soldiers, organised into companies under their own native officers. To this backbone of regulars were added temporary local levies; the whole force being controlled by a handful of young British officers. There was an immense amount of work to be done in many parts of a wide territory, entailing arduous marches in single file along faint tracks, through tropical forests and across frequent swamps: the British officers were too few, and these few were too frequently changed. Owing to the difficulty of conveying goods from the coast, the troops were generally without clothing and often in arrears of pay and yet were not allowed to loot.

The expedition against Kabarega started in two columns on February 20, 1895, with the maxim gun detachment commanded by Vandeleur and was composed of four and a half companies of Sudanese and some 2000 irregular Baganda and Bunyoro levies. It marched through Northern Unyoro to the Victoria Nile and encamped on an island opposite the enemy's position. The river was here 1100 yards broad, and the masses of "sudd" on either side rendered the crossing difficult. Every opening in the vegetation on the enemy's bank was defended by stockades and entrenchments, and these had to be attacked from the island, under cover of a maxim gun fusillade.

The attack was timed for dawn on March 2, and the intervening days were devoted to the construction of

a raised platform at the edge of the water, on which the maxims were posted. It was a cold misty dawn when the five canoes carrying the Sudanese under Cunningham, Dunning and Ashburnham pushed out and proceeded along a narrow channel in the weeds to the edge of the open water, where they were to wait for daylight. Meanwhile Vandeleur was straining his eyes from the platform to get a glimpse of the opposite shore. At last the air cleared, the canoes paddled out into the stream and the maxims opened fire; but the enemy were prepared. They opened a heavy fusillade on the advancing canoes, upset two of them, and completely repulsed the attack. Cunningham and Dunning were severely wounded; Ashburnham had a narrow escape from a bullet in his helmet; several of the men were killed and wounded. The care of the wounded officers being now the main consideration, it was decided to withdraw to Hoima. Dunning, shot through the chest, was in a critical condition, but there was no medical man to attend on him, and all that was known of the nearest available doctor was that he had "started from the coast in November," and might, therefore, by now have reached Hoima.

The melancholy procession accordingly quitted the feverish camp on the island, escorting the wounded officers through undergrowth and swamps which sorely impeded the bearers, and constantly harassed by natives flushed with victory.

"On March 9 [wrote Vandeleur] a black came up in haste to the front of the column to fetch me, and on going back a short way I found poor Dunning quite unconscious. His litter had been placed on the ground, and the bearers were standing round in a

helpless manner. I made every effort to restore him, but in vain, and at length the sad conviction stole over me that he was dead. I had striven hard not to believe that this was the case, and must confess to giving way altogether, in grief of the loss of a brave and gallant comrade and realising the utter sadness of such a death in this far-off savage land. . . . Ashburnham and I were anxious about Cunningham, and he was not informed of Dunning's death till, on reaching Hoima, the fact could no longer be concealed. Here, to our dismay, there was still no doctor, and Dr. Mackinnon did not arrive till March 30. However, Cunningham, with rest and care, improved gradually and was soon able to get about on crutches."

Such are the risks which British officers incur on distant expeditions, when the proverbial "corporal's guard" is called upon to secure a province. To criticise is easy, but we should recollect that, unless during three centuries we had secured provinces with corporal's guards, we should now have but few provinces in the Empire.

Every effort was made to collect a stronger force and, by April 20, Cunningham was well enough to take command of the following men assembled at Mruli, on the Victoria Nile: six companies Sudanese (500 men); 20,000 Baganda, under the Katikiro (general of the Uganda army); two Hotchkiss guns, three maxim guns, and the following British officers—Ternan, Ashburnham, Madocks, Vandeleur, Dr. Mackinnon.

Kabarega and his men had moved further east, and were in larger numbers in the Wakedi country opposite Mruli, spending busy nights in digging entrenchments and hammering at stockades on the

cliffs of the Nile bank. By day our maxims harassed them continually from across the river. On the 22nd Mr. Grant arrived with a fleet of canoes and delivered a successful attack, covered by a heavy fire from the Hotchkiss and maxims. The canoes crossed the river to the barrier of " sudd," where their occupants waded ashore and carried the stockade by storm. This decided the day, and in a few moments the enemy could be seen flying over the hill, pursued by the Baganda. They had fought well, as the dead found in the trenches, forty-three in number, showed.

The next three days were occupied by the force in crossing over the Nile, with the exception of a detachment under Ashburnham, sent along the left bank to prevent Kabarega from crossing back into Unyoro. The main body advanced along the right bank, supported by the canoes, one of which, called the flag-ship, was hewn out of a single tree and easily held fifty men and a maxim. Kabarega retreated through the Wakedi country, whose inhabitants are a primitive and naked people, armed with spears, bows and poisoned arrows, a race of small men, formidable on account of their boldness and agility. They are famed for night attacks, in which they had frequently routed our allies the Baganda in times past and they inspired considerable dread. However, our policy was one of friendliness to the Wakedi, with whom we had no quarrel, and strict orders were issued that their villages were not to be molested; but their hostility to the Baganda prompted them to spear both men and women from the cover of the high grass, and their agility enabled them to escape unhurt; consequently, the Baganda could not always be restrained from retaliating on the villages.

The pursuit of Kabarega by a ponderous column

surrounded by unfriendly Wakedi evidently had but slight chances of success, so Cunningham sent forward a flying column of two companies Sudanese, one maxim, 7000 Baganda under Madocks and Vandeleur. This force started in the lightest possible order; marched at a rapid pace the whole of one day, and was off again at dawn the following morning; the tracks of the enemy's cattle became fresher each hour; there even seemed a chance of coming up with Kabarega's main body. The pace grew faster and faster, and the Baganda scouts were like hounds in full cry. Unluckily, a halt at noon was absolutely necessary to enable the porters carrying ammunition to come up, as the Wakedi threatened to rush the rear. At 3 P.M. an immense quantity of cattle were captured, with a loss to us of ten killed and wounded. But the pace had been too fast, our men were too tired to move further that day, and so Kabarega eluded pursuit. A zariba was formed and watch kept against a night attack by the Wakedi, to whom the captured cattle formed an overwhelming temptation. Next day the flying column rejoined the main body in safety.

The result of the campaign was that forts and administrative posts were established in northern Unyoro and along the Victoria Nile; that some 250 women and children, who had been raided in past years, were restored to their homes; and that Kabarega, though he eluded capture, suffered a severe loss of cattle, was driven from the country and his sphere of iniquity considerably diminished. He had finally to be dealt with by another expedition a few years later.

Vandeleur returned to Hoima, and found they had been having exciting times, as the following entries in the diary of Mr. Foster, will show:

"*April* 19.—Lion visited camp during night and carried off woman.

"*April* 20.—Lion came again and took another woman.

"*April* 21.—Lion carried off a man. Seen by patrols and fired at. He visited cattle-house and was wounded by guard.

"*April* 22.—Section went out to look for lion and found him near river. Badly wounded, but very fierce! Was killed and brought to camp.

"*April* 24.—Another lion (probably lioness) visited camp during night and carried off child. Was seen by patrols and fired at.

"*April* 25.—Lioness came again and went to cattle-house, where guard fired at and wounded her. One of the shots struck house at considerable distance and entered thigh of woman, where it still remains. Woman apparently little the worse.

"*May* 3.—Askari (soldier) broke out of camp at night in drunken state and fired six shots at sentries. Attempts made to capture him, but without success."

And yet some people think life in Africa must be so dull!

Vandeleur's stay in this exciting spot was brief, as in two days he was sent on an expedition, this time in command. Disturbances had been rife in Southern Unyoro owing to Arab caravans bringing arms and gunpowder into the country in exchange for slaves and ivory. Cunningham was down with blackwater fever, so Vandeleur was ordered off with two companies Sudanese, one maxim and the Baganda irregulars; total, 250 men. The little force pushed forward as quickly as pouring rain and difficult tracks allowed. The country was entirely unmapped and it was not

easy to obtain information as to the whereabouts of the Arab station—the objective of the expedition. By good luck, however, it was located on the further side of two big swamps and a river. These crossed, a road led to the station, and owing to the high grass surrounding it, Vandeleur and his men surprised and captured it successfully. Eighteen prisoners were taken and several slaves, besides a quantity of cloth, ivory, silks, guns and gunpowder, but the leaders themselves escaped into the bush.

It is curious that this station had existed so long without being discovered and shows the difficulty of ascertaining what goes on in this wilderness of high elephant grass and river swamps. Kalfan, the leading Arab, had been in Unyoro two years and employed a number of subordinates who conducted caravans to and from the coast through German territory. It must have been a lucrative trade, as the price of slaves was not high. One woman said she had been bought for three goats, with an extra goat thrown in for her child. Another woman had been sold for a load of beads, and others for guns. Apparently there was a demand for fat ladies, as there were four Baganda slaves of such mountainous proportions that they could hardly move about.

On the return journey Vandeleur resolved to follow a different road and was rewarded with a piece of great good fortune. His scouts warned him that a caravan was approaching, having chosen this very route in order to avoid him, and sure enough the Arab leaders, strolling at the head of their men, walked straight into the arms of an ambush concealed in the high grass. Some escaped; but the leaders, many prisoners and all the loot of the caravan fell into the hands of Vandeleur's delighted Sudanese. As a result

of this expedition the local chiefs came in to make their peace with the British, communications were opened and confidence restored, and by July 1, Vandeleur was back at Hoima with his captured loot, prisoners and slaves. His men were granted two months' pay as a gratuity for their services ; he himself received a letter of warm congratulation from the headquarters of the Protectorate, and his reputation as a successful leader of men was established in Uganda.

Shortly afterwards he received orders to march with a detachment of Sudanese to take part in an impending expedition against the Nandi tribe, and he thus quitted Unyoro for ever.

During his nine months' stay there he collected the material for the first authentic map of the country ; and so excellent and accurate was his geographical work that he was subsequently awarded the *Murchison Grant* by the Royal Geographical Society, one of the highest compliments which could be paid to an officer who was not an engineer by trade, and whose duties were as numerous as Vandeleur's.

Space forbids any but a cursory description of the Nandi expedition, the troops for which consisted of 400 Sudanese, a maxim, and a contingent of 30 Baganda. Such a force proved inadequate to the task imposed on it, as the country was mountainous and it was impossible to ascertain anything concerning it, for the surrounding natives held the Nandi in such dread that they refused to act as guides. A desultory and harassing campaign was the result ; the little expedition advanced far into the mountains, finally attaining an altitude of 9000 feet ; only on two occasions did the Nandi attack in strength, but sniping was a matter of daily occurrence, and every night the force packed itself into a zariba, the sentries calling out the numbers of

their posts monotonously and incessantly throughout the night to ensure keeping awake. The officers learned afterwards from prisoners that this precaution had saved them from night attacks, a method of warfare especially favoured by the Nandi.

One day, when the expedition had climbed over several mountains without seeing an enemy, heavy firing in front announced that the patrol was engaged.

"The column prepared for action; and none too soon. Only a few natives were visible on the ridge, and it was with astonishment we saw a crowd of about 500 coming over the top of the hill at great speed, apparently well organised and formed in three sides of a square, above which a dense thicket of long-bladed spears flashed in the sunlight. Wheeling to the left by a common impulse, on they came, in spite of the maxim, and charged down with great dash on our force, which closed up to face the attack. It was a critical moment, but the Sudanese stood firm, and as the mass of natives approached our heavy fire began to tell. Nearer and nearer they came and it almost seemed that they would overwhelm my company, which had to bear the brunt of the attack; but at last, wavering before the leaden hail which they had never before experienced, their ranks broke and they scattered in all directions, leaving many of their number on the ground. It was a splendid charge, and, if continued for thirty yards more, would have been a successful one. Fourteen of our men were killed. This charge was a revelation to us after fighting the cautious Bunyoro and Arabs, and at once accounted for the reputation and prestige which the Nandi enjoyed amongst other East African tribes. They are a fine-looking race, very black, strong and muscular."

Two nights afterwards they attempted a desperate night attack, which likewise failed, the flame from the rifles causing more panic to the Nandi than their heavy losses the day before. After this they attempted no further attacks, but operations dragged on profitlessly enough for another month and when, on New Year's Day, 1896, the expedition returned to Uganda, it left the Nandi cowed, but by no means subdued. In fact so intolerable did their depredations become, much after the fashion of the Scottish Highlanders of old, that in 1900 a strong force was sent to subdue them. After six months' fighting had taught them our power, they sued for peace, became our good friends and some of their "young bloods" are now members of the Uganda Constabulary, the guardians of law and order.

Vandeleur had now but a few months to spend in East Africa, for in April he embarked for England at Mombasa. Reviewing his work it may truthfully be said that he never spent an idle moment, that at twenty-six he had laid the foundation of a good military reputation and that his services were highly appreciated by his superiors.

As regards himself the years spent in Uganda marked out the trend of his after life. Africa laid her hold on him as she does on other men, and henceforward service abroad became the one thing worth living for. It was not merely from love of fighting or from a vague feeling that soldiering at home was not good enough that he was drawn away. The African country, the natives, the work and all the circumstances of life in a land of spacious areas attracted him.

He was delighted to return to home ties and friends and his regiment and regarded such times as a holiday,

but his real interest lay elsewhere. Indeed, he did his best to pass straight from Uganda to another sphere of African warfare. The Dongola Expedition was about to start, and Seymour broke his journey at Cairo in the hope of obtaining employment in it. There were, however, no vacancies, so he lost his comfortable P. & O. berth for nothing, and had to put up with a disagreeable passage in the cabin of a cargo boat. During the next few months he thought of going out to the Matabele War, but was again disappointed, so began reading for the Staff College and—with Egypt still in his mind—embarked on the study of Arabic.

Despite these pre-occupations, Seymour thoroughly enjoyed his London season and cultivated new friends some of whom, like himself, had their thoughts centred on African topics. His stock of information was already considerable and, though very modest about it, he was not too self-conscious to discuss things with men of greater experience. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, became a regular attendant at their meetings and read a paper on Uganda. At Liverpool he also gave a lecture to the British Association on his journey down the Nile to Dufile.

His maps of the Nandi country and Unyoro attracted attention at the War Office and were adopted by the Intelligence Department as the official surveys of those territories, giving Vandeleur much hard work to complete them. After he rejoined his battalion in London a reward for his services reached him in the shape of the D.S.O.—a decoration which was not then so much worn as it is now. He received the announcement with unbounded delight and records in his diary a few days later that he was on the Queen's Guard with Captain Pulteney and "feels sure that it is the

UGANDA & EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE.

BRITISH EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE
UGANDA PROTECTORATE
LAKE RUDOLF (Basso Narok)
LAKE VICTORIA N'YANZA
ALBERT EDWARD NYANZA
ALBERT NYANZA
LAKE KIVU
LEASED TO KING LEOLOPOLD
Abaya L.
Stefanie 1830
Hawatu
Elmolo
Sugota
Baringo 3325
Naivasha 6812
Kenia
Kilimanjaro 19720
Meru
Elgon 14200
Moroto 10,000
Chemorongi
Suk Hills
Nakuru
Elmenteita
Aberdare
Machakos
Nairobi
Mombas
Kisumu
Entebbe & Port Alice
Port Florence
Kampala
Mumia's
Wadelai
Dufile
Fatiko
Dodosi
Kibali or Kibbi R.
Victoria Nile
Albert Nile
Semliki R.
Kafu R.
Sobat R.
Juba or Dundas R.
Tana R.
Athi R.
Uganda
Unyoro
Toro
Ankole
Karagwe
Usoga
Busoga
Kavirondo Bay
Speke Gulf
Port Dunford
FORMOSA BAY
Ras Gomany
Malindi
Takaungu
Kilifi
Sabaki R.
Makangeni
Ganda
Tsavo
Taveta
Moshi
Arusha
Kahe
Mbulu
Manyara
Evasi
Isahzu L.
Kirambo
Usongo
Luseba
Mkamba's
Nyatakara
Yavigimbas
Nyarvongo
Kagera R.
Ruanda
Urundi
Usukuma
Usui
Ukerewe
Shashi R.
Speke Gulf
Nanama
Busunyai
Natron L.
Loarrya L.
Ngai Volcano
Simiyu R.
Kagera R.
Kavirondo Bay
Kwa Hindi
Bukoba
Kitangole
Viruna Mts
Kagera
Masaka
Sessi Islands
Entebbe
Kisenge
Mwenda's
Fort Lugard
Fort Nakabimba
Fort Kampala
Fort Mruli
Victoria Nile
Albert Nile
Semliki R.
Lake Kwania
Lake Salisbury
Lake Choga
Lake Kirkpatrick
Lake Dabasiena
Sud Hills
Mt. Moroto
Mt. Elgon
Mt. Debess
Mt. Lorogli
Mt. Chibaramani
Mt. Kenia
Mt. Kilimanjaro
Mt. Meru
Mt. Hoho
Mt. Erua
Mt. Amaria
Mt. Agabi
Mt. Nakua
Mt. Tirano
Mt. Lubur
Mt. Logire
Mt. Harogo
Mt. Agoro
Mt. Hobur
Mt. Kulal
Mt. Horoli
Mt. Inuro
Mt. Loldibo
Mt. Marsabit
Mt. Kulal
Mt. Fertso
Mt. Haliya
Mt. Hunda
Mt. Elgon
Mt. Moroto
Mt. Kenia
Mt. Kilimanjaro
Mt. Meru
Mt. Elmitan
Mt. Guhabi
Mt. Uhoni
Mt. Ndigira
Mt. Balangida
Mt. Kissale
Mt. Sambu
Mt. Lukutu
Mt. Kasigau
Mt. Kasiwa
Mt. Mbololo

first time that two D.S.O.s have been on guard together."

He received the decoration from the hands of the Queen at Windsor just at the time when the wish of his heart was granted, in that he obtained Sir George Goldie's offer of six months' special service in the Niger Protectorate. Thus he set forth again at the end of November, within seven months of his return to England.

However, before we follow his footsteps any further it will be advisable to acquaint ourselves with the story of Nigeria.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF NIGERIA

See map of Africa at end of book

THE intention of this chapter is to afford the reader some insight into the general history of the States of the interior of northern Africa, and especially of those which are called British Nigeria. To make the subject clear, we are necessarily taken far back into past centuries and moved to chronicle the enterprises of energetic men whose names are unfamiliar to Englishmen, unless they happen to be acquainted with African history. It is a story full of adventure and curious incident, and one which is likely to attract more and more attention in these islands, now that Great Britain has occupied her share of the Continent and become responsible for many millions of its inhabitants. Under a wise government Nigeria's future prosperity is likely to be prodigious : its history, meanwhile, is wondrously interesting.

We should, however, bear in mind that the modern term " Nigeria " is a European colloquialism which bears but slight resemblance to the native subdivision of the country, though it is an apt expression to designate the region over which King Edward VII. rules. Its frontiers have been arbitrarily arranged between ourselves and France and Germany, and they necessarily cut in twain ancient native kingdoms and settled areas which happen to lie on the border. For the sake of a peaceful solution to the European partition

of Africa, we must abide by our treaties and train our subjects to acquiesce in their altered landmarks, which, on the whole, are not likely to prove a difficulty.

A glance at the maps of Africa will put the reader in possession of the respective French, German, and British spheres, to which we need not again refer in retailing the local history. He will see, too, the whole course of the Niger river, rising behind the coast mountains of Sierra Leone, sweeping in a magnificent semi-circle through populous regions, and (with its only important tributary, the Benue) traversing 3000 miles of Africa on its journey to the Atlantic. Yet this mighty river was first seen by the Scotsman, Mungo Park, in 1796, and first traced to its mouth by Richard Lander in 1830—so carefully were its hundred mouths concealed in mangrove swamps and intricate channels.

But, although authentic confirmation of the existence of the Niger only came to us a hundred years ago, the river had been discovered by the Roman explorer Julius Maternus, who crossed the Sahara Desert at the beginning of the Christian era; he was followed in 37 A.D. by the Roman General C. Suetonius Paulus, who wrote a description of negroland which is quoted by Pliny. These explorers had no incentive beyond their individual enterprise, no financial backing save that of a few personal friends and their labours consequently bore no permanent results; for, to successfully explore and map a continent requires for its accomplishment a great deal more than the geographer's curiosity or the traveller's desire to collect incredible tales.

With the disappearance of the Roman Empire and the events which followed we are not concerned, but the eighth century saw a revolutionising change in the conditions of northern Africa, brought about

by the first Arab conquest and the spread of a revealed religion. In 640 A.D. a certain Amru Ibn el Aasse invaded Egypt with 4000 Arabs ; and, following them, wave upon wave of Moslem immigrants poured into the northern coastlands, bearing aloft the torch of Islam, inculcating a new spiritual life, introducing everywhere progressive methods of agriculture, commerce, trade, industries and, above all, instituting a system of government which proved suitable to the backward state of the country. Europe was swept out of the continent, including the remnants of that remarkable crowd of 80,000 Goths who crossed over from Spain under Genseric in 480 A.D. and settled about Carthage, where they maintained themselves against Rome for a century.

These Arab conquerors were no mere land-grabbers and plunderers ; they set systematically to work to regenerate the country and henceforth identified their interests with it. Cities were built and the natives raised above their condition under the decayed Empire of Rome. Thus they altered the destiny of the indigenous populations, founded states, developed a commercial activity more extensive than that of ancient Carthage, introduced the camel into Africa, instituted regular caravan routes across the continent and protected them, so that merchandise could, for the first time, be transported for journeys of a thousand miles by land. To assert that they converted and ruled by the sword alone is to misrepresent a shrewd race of governors. Education and industrial development were features of their administrative system, without which it could not have lasted during nine centuries. Every village had one or more schools where Arabic reading and writing were taught to the offspring of the Arabs as well as to the children of the soil, and

where the Mohamedan laws of the Koran were expounded and learnt by heart. These Arabs were a prolific race and did not disdain marriage with the women of the country, so class distinctions became gradually attenuated and therefore less irksome to the governed; slaves and eunuchs could, and frequently did rise to positions of power and responsibility.

Arab geographers explored the continent in every direction; historians recorded the reigns of the kings and emperors of the more powerful dynasties. Streams of pilgrims poured across the continent to Mecca, and kept up a continuous intercourse between the various States through which they passed. When we look back and consider the times and the general state of the world in the Middle Ages, and reflect upon the inaccessibility of interior Africa and the difficulties the Arabs encountered, we must admit that they accomplished a great work of civilisation in the regions they ruled.

It would appear from the records that the religion of Mohamed first crossed the Sahara in the tenth century, and by the end of the fourteenth had taken root among the indigenous negroes of the Niger region where it continues to spread in our own times. Some of the Arab explorers were men of considerable mental attainments and understood the science of geography, such as El Bekri, who lived at the time of our William the Conqueror, and Idrissi (1154), to whose maps and writings we are indebted for a first glimpse of the country about Lake Chad and the various races of Nigeria.

In 1352, a man who rejoiced in the name of Ibn Batuta of Tangier was commissioned by the Sultan of Morocco to undertake an expedition. This remarkable explorer journeyed from Fez to Timbuktu,

descended the Niger to Gogo, pushed southwards and eastwards across the whole continent, emerged near Zanzibar and returned to Morocco through the eastern Sudan. Unfortunately his book of travels has not been preserved, with the exception of a portion found in Cairo, though it is hoped that careful research may ultimately discover a copy. Another envoy of the court of Morocco to the Sudanese kings was Hassan el Wasas, known in Europe as Leo Africanus, whose "Description of Africa," written in Arabic in 1526, has been translated into Latin, Italian, French and English. There were numbers of other historians and explorers at work, but sufficient indication has been given to show how widespread was Arab influence and how extensive the territory it embraced. It probably attained its highest development in the sixteenth century, since when it has been either stationary or retrograde.

All along the Mediterranean coast the fiery zeal of the followers of the Prophet compelled Berbers, Romans, Greeks, Goths and others to merge their distinctions and become Moslems or perish, but in the course of centuries this ruthless fanaticism died down, and a milder procedure than that of exterminating the recalcitrant was employed in propounding the faith to the tribes of negroes further south. Progress was slower, and to this day many of these tribes remain pagan, but the ruling families of negroland embraced the religion of the Koran with avidity; it was suited to their stage of mental development, it appealed to their highest instincts, it added dignity to their lives, and many of them became zealous missionaries of Islam amongst their unconverted brethren.

Negroland suffered no such incursion of Arab hordes as occurred in the north. Nature in the form

of the Sahara interposed a belt of a thousand miles of desert between the fertile shore of the Mediterranean and the still more productive districts of the Sudan; the desert stretched across the continent from the Red Sea to the Atlantic and was the determining factor in moulding the destiny of Nigeria. In this connection it is instructive to look along the 13th degree of north latitude, which roughly divides the region of efficient rain from that of scanty rain, and therefore indicates the temperate rain-zone of northern Africa. It divides populations whose wealth consists of cattle, from those whose wealth is camels; it has an average elevation above the sea of 1000 to 2000 feet; and has been the scene of the greatest Arab activity, from the tenth century down to the Baggara empire of the Dervishes, which recently held the Egyptian Sudan in an iron grip.

If we except the Abyssinian highlands (6000 feet average), there are on this thirteenth parallel a series of powerful negro-Arab States, adjoining one another across the full breadth of the continent. These ancient kingdoms are named: (1) Senaar (on the Blue Nile); (2) Kordofan (near the White Nile); (3) Darfur (in the *British* sphere); (4) Wadai (in the *French* sphere); (5) Bagirmi (in the *French* sphere); (6) Bornu (*British*); (7) Sokoto (*British*); (8) Gando (*British*); (9) The Songhay Empire (*French*); (10) The Melle [Mandingo] Empire (*French*); (11) Bambara (*French*); and (12) Senegambia (*French*). Of these Senaar at one time was an enlightened and powerful nation of blacks, Darfur can produce a list of reigning Sultans which carry us back to the remote past; Wadai was, and still is the home of an unconquered Mohamedan people; Bornu, now decadent, was formerly the seat of an empire which governed the whole region around Lake

Chad ; Sokoto and Gando are two divisions of the empire of the Fulani and Hausas, which ruled the Western Sudan through the nineteenth century ; the Songhay Empire attained its zenith in the sixteenth century ; the Melle Empire in the fourteenth century. All these states, and others beside them, have enjoyed wide dominion or dwindled into mere vassals, according to the individual capacity of their sultans and viziers, their success in suppressing turbulent factions within and beating off the incursions of envious neighbours from without. As soon as a community became prosperous under an enlightened ruler, it also became a tempting prize to some member of his unruly family, or to a neighbouring sultan, and sooner or later fell a prey either to internal revolution or external attack. Thus it comes about that the continent is strewn with the remains of destroyed cities, each surrounded by signs of a once prosperous agriculture, but now the home of nothing but jackals, for it is a traditional custom with Mohamedan princes not to rebuild a fallen city.

Having briefly considered the general trend of the Arab conquest of the whole Sudan, we will turn our attention to those states with which we have recently become more intimately connected, namely Sokoto, Gando and Bornu, which lie within the borders of Nigeria and are administered by British officials.

Sokoto and Gando are really two unnecessary subdivisions of the Hausa States, which until recently formed part of the Fulani Empire and deserve special attention. The Hausa race is said to have originated in the oasis of Air in the midst of the Sahara, whence in the eighth century it was driven south in the course of the Arab invasion. Under the leadership of seven capable brothers, the offspring of a certain Berber

mother, this black tribe spread itself eastwards and westwards along the southern margin of the desert and founded seven states, which prospered owing to the fertility of the soil, the industry of the population and the policy pursued by the seven brothers. In course of time the Hausas so increased that seven additional provinces were added, and these are jocosely called the upstart states by the inhabitants of the more ancient settlements. Hausaland was visited and described by Leo Africanus at the end of the fifteenth century, when only its rulers professed the Mohamedan faith : the bulk of the people were then snake-worshippers, and remained pagans, with a slight admixture of Islamic rites, until the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is, in fact, a point of interest in their history that they so long escaped conversion to the ruling religion, especially as they inhabited a country which lay alongside one of the principal highways of Arab migration. However, when at last they were converted by the Fulani, they embraced Mohamedanism with complete satisfaction, and have remained its devoted adherents ever since. Their religion had a most vivifying effect on the race, as it has invariably had on the negroids of Africa, whose too susceptible natures require the restraint of a fixed ritual and the discipline of a strict code of laws.

The Hausa is distinctly the business-man of Africa ; his looms and dye-pits produce the chief articles of internal trade and are often in use as currency in adjusting a deal or settling a bargain ; his language is the language of commerce throughout the Western Sudan. He has no political ambitions and is not a governing personality, being of a cheerful, happy-go-lucky disposition, good-humouredly contemptuous of his pagan customers but without desiring to convert

them. To quote Mr. Morel: "His manufacturing skill is not only remarkable for Africa; it puts Europe to the blush. For closeness, durability and firmness of texture, the products of his looms and dye-pits eclipse anything that Manchester can produce. In a land of reputed indolence, his activity is as conspicuous as his enterprise. He makes an ideal commercial traveller, peddling his wares over enormous distances, and seldom failing to secure a considerable profit on his transactions." It is unfortunate that the original history of Hausaland, which was written in Arabic characters and included the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, was deliberately destroyed by the conquering Fulani in order to effectually obliterate all evidence of Hausa independence.

But who are these Fulani of whom we so frequently read?

The answer to this question takes us back through the centuries to the story of the remote past of ancient Egypt, and the year 2136 B.C., a story which is full of interest, but can only be briefly sketched in these pages.* In the year named several hordes of Asiatic shepherds invaded the land of Egypt and drove into the fertile valley of the Nile their herds of hump-backed cattle and blob-tailed, roman-nosed sheep. Whether they abandoned their Asiatic homes through drought or by reason of land-hunger in an over-populated area is unknown, at any rate their incursion was stoutly resisted by the local inhabitants, and a long and sanguinary conflict arose in the land, converting the nomadic shepherds into warriors and statesmen fighting for their existence. In the end the invaders established their supremacy, and are recorded in history

* It is very well told in "Affairs of West Africa," by E. D. Morel. Heinemann. 1902.

as the " Shepherd Kings " whose dynasty endured for five centuries. They appear to have ruled with wisdom what was undoubtedly the greatest state of the then civilised world.

However, in the year 1636 B.C. they were overthrown by the ancient Theban dynasty, and had again to migrate with their herds in search of pastures new. They struck southwards up the Nile into the Sudan [" The land of the blacks,"] and wandered, some along the Blue Nile into the Abyssinian mountains where they became the ancestors of the Galas and Bahima of Uganda, some others away westwards across the continent to the Niger. Here they scattered and resumed the nomadic life, chiefly in the districts about the sources of the Senegal and Gambia rivers, where their herds found suitable pasturage. In all their wanderings amidst inferior races and strange surroundings they retained their pride of race, their faith in the bull-worship of their ancestors, their stories of ancient Hebrew laws and customs, handed down from generation to generation. More important still, they kept their Asiatic blood pure by never permitting their daughters to wed any but men of their own race, though the men also took wives from the aboriginal populations amongst whom they dwelt.

This remarkable people must have reached West Africa long before the dawn of the Christian era, yet they retain to this day the characteristics of their nomad ancestry, and are known in the Sudan as the Fulani (plural). They are loosely scattered in small groups over a vast area, dwelling with their flocks and herds amongst pagan or Mohamedan tribes as the case may be, ruling over some, subject to others, strict followers of the Prophet in general, though pagans in a very few inaccessible districts. Their

conversion to Mohamedanism occurred in the sixteenth century.

As regards appearance the pure-bred Fulani are still of an Eastern type, their copper-coloured skin, straight hair, clean-cut features and well-developed skulls differing widely from those of the African races. The women may be described as quite good-looking. The numerous mixed progeny of Fulani men and negresses has introduced a strain of blood which has been of advantage to the lower races throughout the land. Everywhere the Fulani are distinguishable by their fine linen, haughty manners, cleanly habits and irreproachable orthodoxy.

In 1802, after centuries of mild subjection to pagans, the Fulani of Hausaland started a revolt which had far-reaching consequences. Inspired by a religious enthusiast named Othman Dan Fodio, the scattered groups of herdsmen assembled beneath the banner of Islam, attacked and subjugated all the Hausa States and founded an empire which extended from Lake Chad to Senegal. They so communicated the feryour of their intense religious feelings to their converts that a Christian missionary has recently admitted that "To the Hausa what is in the Koran is of God, and what is not in the Koran is not worth knowing." Othman, the leader of this remarkable movement, died in 1817 in a fit of religious mania, and was succeeded by his sons, of whom only Sultan Bello was a capable man. The Fulani Empire, decadent and latterly pernicious, made way in 1903 for British rule under Sir Frederick Lugard.

We will next turn our attention to the beginnings of European enterprise in West Africa.

Dismissing the unverified story put forward by certain French writers to prove that a colony of hardy

Dieppe fishermen was established on the Guinea Coast in the fourteenth century, we commence the narrative in 1456, when certain of Prince Henry of Portugal's patient adventurers discovered the mouths of the Senegal and Gambia rivers. They returned with vague stories of the fabulous wealth of Timbuktu. A chartered company was started in Lisbon which on its first venture imported a cargo of 200 slaves, and the Portuguese commenced the traffic in black humanity which was carried on uninterruptedly during four centuries: to them belongs the distinction of being the first European nation to begin it and the last to leave it off. They built forts along the West Coast and endeavoured to open up trade with the far interior, but there is no authentic record of their having established more than a precarious intercourse with the natives through whom they bargained for slaves. Being first in possession and jealous of interference by rivals, they bent their energies chiefly to strengthening their monopoly, and were so far successful as to retain it for a century.

But sooner or later a monopoly which has to be fought for by armed trading ships is sure to be contested by adventurous outsiders, and we accordingly find that in 1550 (a few years before Queen Elizabeth ascended our throne) a guild of London merchants fitted out a small fleet and sent it to the Guinea Coast under the command of Captain Thomas Windham, a younger son of Sir Thomas Windham, the direct ancestor of the present Wyndhams of Petworth House, Sussex. He was noted as a successful navigator, and was therefore put in charge of this first British trading voyage to the West Coast, his quest being gold. He made three separate voyages, and on one of them brought home "150 lbs. of gold," which at present

prices would mean a sum of £7000. In his journal he records in 1552: "Here, by the way, it is to be observed that the Portuguese were much offended with this our new trade into Barbary; and both in our voyage the year before and also in this, gave out in England, through the merchants, that if they took us in those parts they would use us as their mortal enemies."

Undaunted by threats, a certain John Lok undertook a couple of years later a trading voyage which he described in minute detail. He owned three ships and some smaller boats, and took two months to reach the Gold Coast. He found the natives willing to bargain, and, in exchange for cloth and other articles, brought back a valuable cargo—400 lbs. of gold, 36 cwt. of pepper and 250 tusks of ivory, some of which weighed 90 lbs. each—so Master Lok's voyage was a success, in spite of Portuguese opposition and without a cargo of slaves. Others, especially Towrson, followed this trade with vigour and profit; but to Sir John Hawkins belongs the discredit of being the first Englishman to embark a cargo of slaves, which he sold in America, notwithstanding an indignant remonstrance from Queen Elizabeth. The year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) saw the first British Chartered Company launched, and about the same time there occurred a minor scramble amongst the European Powers for stations on the West Coast, a scramble which continued spasmodically through the seventeenth century. Spain crushed Portugal and laid claim to her colonies; the Dutch threw off the yoke of Spain and seized them; the Danes engaged with alacrity in what was termed the "new" (*i.e.* slave) trade; the Germans founded their Brandenberg Company; the French laid the foundation of their

extensive West African Empire. Each of the rivals built forts along the coast, the French under the Sieur Brue being more enterprising towards the interior than all the others combined. The British Company seems to have neglected its opportunity and was more or less a failure. Each set of traders held parchments engrossed in magnificent language, signed by their respective sovereigns, granting to each the "monopoly of all trade from Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope and beyond;" the consequent jealousy, confusion and lawlessness were indescribable. Here was the buccaneers' opportunity, at a period when big events were taking place in other parts of the world, and misdeeds on the Gold Coast remained unrecorded and unpunished; how can we be surprised if the reports of the white man's behaviour, which reached the interior through native slave-raiders, disgusted Mohamedan missionaries, and made them curse the white man and his gin?

Thus the seventeenth century closes with the over-sea slave trade in full swing, it being a far more lucrative business than gold, ivory or pepper. The plantations of America and the West Indies were growing apace, their demand for labour annually increased, so that during the eighteenth century we find the French, Dutch and British struggling for supremacy along the West Coast. Of these, the French from the Senegal River continued to display the greater interest in the warlike races which interposed between themselves and Timbuktu; the British were established on the Gambia, and held seventeen forts on the Gold Coast, but these were mostly reduplicated by rival Dutch establishments, with here and there an additional French or Portuguese fort; so there was no monopoly for any nation in the slave trade.

Should my readers be inclined to surmise that these

rival forts were centres from which radiated the civilising influence of the Christian into the recesses of the Dark Continent, let him peruse some of the eighteenth-century literature on this subject and the illusion will soon be dispelled. The life and habits of the Mohamedans were shining lights of virtue compared with that of the white men. A conservative estimate puts the number of negroes shipped across the Atlantic in the year 1748 at the total of 97,000; another computes at 200,000 the number of blacks annually exported during each year of the last decade of the eighteenth century, and it has been calculated that at least seven millions crossed the seas between 1700 and 1800. Those who are acquainted with the rate of mortality which must occur in the raiding of an inland village for slaves, in the caravan journey to the coast and in the holds of sailing-ships, will realise that, for every slave safely landed ten or more were sacrificed, and that this draft of blacks represented a serious drain on the country. In the end there was an awakening of the British conscience; the voice of declamation rose loud in the land; and Abolition was carried in 1807, followed by similar enactments in all other civilised countries by 1815.

Looking with dispassionate eyes on the hot controversies of those days, we perceive that Abolition was a necessity, not from mere sentimentalism, nor because the planters were unkind to their slaves as was often falsely alleged, nor even because slavery is reckoned "immoral;" but because the demand for negroes inflicted an atrocious injury on the nations of Africa and made progress on that Continent impossible. Moreover, the cheap liquor and gunpowder which were exchanged for slaves were gradually sapping the energies of the coastwise populations.

The abolition of over-sea slavery happens also to coincide with the era of legitimate exploration.

If individual heroism, magnificent courage, an indomitable will and an optimism which no adversity could disappoint, are the emblems of a great explorer, then Mungo Park ranks amongst the highest. His achievements should be read in his biography by Joseph Thomson, the life of an explorer by another explorer, because only such an author can convince one of the hardships which Mungo Park endured. In 1795 he started from the Gambia River with a couple of native servants, two donkeys and a horse, plunged into the unknown interior, and emerged in 1799 after exploring 300 miles of the middle Niger. He was ill equipped for such an expedition, which had been the death of many a brave man before him.

"Think of Park, and picture to yourself the position of a lonely European wandering about inland Western Africa in a thick blue fustian coat, with gilt buttons, keeping his precious notes in the crown of a top-hat, and kicked, buffeted, spat upon, treated with contumely, subjected to every insult, over and over again a slave, exposed for hours at a time in a burning sun without water, often on the verge of starvation, racked by disease, and in so miserable a plight upon many occasions that death would have been a welcome relief —yet triumphing over everything, and finally returning, notes and all, to his own land."*

Undaunted, he set out again in 1804, at the request of the British Government, and navigated more than a thousand miles of the Niger in a rickety boat which he built himself, meeting his death at the hands of the natives in the rapids of Busa.

* "Affairs of West Africa."

For some years after this fatality all endeavours to reach the Niger from the West Coast failed, and resulted in the death of the explorers from disease and hardships. It was therefore decided to make an attempt from the Mediterranean, to follow the route of the Arab conquerors and utilise if possible the native caravan trade as a means of crossing the Sahara from Tripoli. Accordingly three Englishmen, Clapperton, Denham and Oudney (a naval captain, a major, and a doctor) started in 1821, under the auspicies of the British Government. Every sort of difficulty was put in their way by the local merchants, who suspected them as trading rivals ; they took six months to journey from Tripoli to Fezzan, where they were further delayed seven months more before they could commence the desert march : it was therefore with great delight that they beheld the gleaming waters of Lake Chad in February 1823. Having at last penetrated into negroland, they were much gratified by the warm welcome extended to them by the reigning Sultan of Bornu.

"It was in a sense a new world which the explorers had entered, a world of absorbing interest, where Eastern magnificence and display mingled with the naked barbarism of Africa ; where semi-arabised potentates went a-warring with mail-clad knights, and powerful barons brought their contingent of retainers to assist their liege-lord in his campaigns of plunder and conquest. The travellers had left nineteenth-century England, had plunged into the desert and had emerged therefrom amid a feudalism which recalled the Middle Ages. . . . They were the first white men to reach the Chad, to discover the Shari, to explore Bornu, Sokoto and part of Kanem, and

to describe, however indifferently, the wonderful social fabric, the picturesque civilisation, teeming with energy and industrialism, which existed, and exists in the upper portion of the Niger basin."*

Clapperton alone survived to tell the tale of his journey through the beautiful country, adorned with plantations of cotton, tobacco and indigo, rows of date palms, magnificent herds of cattle, and to describe the industry of the Hausa inhabitants, their proficiency in weaving, dyeing and churning, their aptitude as traders ; and to expatiate on the qualities of the ruling Fulani, who encouraged industry and protected trade routes with such success that the city of Kano became the greatest emporium of Central Africa. Such was the impression produced on the rough-and-ready sailor, who was too ready to accept the Fulani version of the prosperity which he beheld. If, however, we wish to possess a scientific knowledge of the country and peoples of Nigeria, we may turn from the glowing descriptions of Captain Clapperton to the five thoughtful volumes in which Dr. Barth, a cultivated, genial German, recorded his wanderings from 1850 to 1855.

The expedition which he joined was organised by Lord Palmerston, with Dr. Richardson as its leader, for the purpose of promoting commercial intercourse with the states which Clapperton had visited. Barth was the lecturer at the University of Berlin on Comparative Geography and Colonial Commerce ; he had lately published his " Wanderings Round the Mediterranean," which comprised a journey through Barbary in the company of Arabs ; and he was permitted to join Richardson's expedition, provided he was willing to contribute £200 towards his personal

* " Affairs of West Africa."

expenses. But Richardson died of fever in Bornu, in March, 1851, so, in the words of Barth, "Her Majesty's Government honoured me with their confidence, and, in authorising me to carry out the objects of the expedition, placed sufficient means at my disposal for the purpose. The position in which I was thus placed must be my excuse for undertaking, after the successful accomplishment of my labours, the difficult task of relating them in a language not my own." Such was the modest preface in which he introduced to the British public the delightful pages which convey a truer insight into the condition of the Sudan than can be gained from any other source. Barth was qualified by temperament and years of previous study for the task he undertook; his acquaintance with the history of Africa and his familiarity with the traditions of its religions placed him on a footing of equality with the educated Mohamedans whom he met; his sincerity and straight dealing disarmed the intrigues of suspicious fanatics; and wherever he tarried he made friends who were willing to forward him on his travels and glad to see him when he returned. He was a naturalist, a linguist and a scientific geographer.

Throughout his volumes one is struck by his intelligent observations on men and things. There are no cheap reflections, no endeavours to "make up" a book; his triumphant enthusiasm at each discovery of importance is obviously genuine; and his disappointment when obliged to stay in some native town with nothing to do is best expressed in his words: "The little information which I had been able to gather at this place was not sufficient to give my restless spirit its proper nourishment, and I felt, therefore, mentally depressed."

Starting from Tripoli, Barth's itinerary comprised Fezzan, Agades, Zinder, Kano, Bornu, Adamawa, Bagirmi, Logon, Sokoto, Gando, Say, Timbuktu, Gogo, Lake Chad, Kanem, and Bilma; it occupied five consecutive years; and as the States and cities which he visited and studied have since been more or less occupied by France, England, or Germany, Barth's are the only unprejudiced notes we shall ever have of Nigeria under native rule. He had no political interests to subserve; in fact, he made it a stipulation of his engagement that the mission should be non-political; yet the lesson which every chapter of his book emphasises is that, in spite of the picturesque and, in a few instances, capable government of the Sultans and viziers, the state of the country was bad, life and property were insecure, the stability of all institutions was precarious, slave-raiding was universal and wealthy communities were continually the prey of plunderers and freebooters. Even within the few years of his personal experience he several times attests the total ruin of prosperous towns and districts in which he had been hospitably entertained on previous occasions. Native rulers deplored with him the existence of this state of things, but neither the enligthened Vizier of Bornu nor the Fulani Sultans of Sokoto and Gando had the will or the power to correct the evil, or even to mitigate its effects. Each princeling—and princelings are numerous throughout Nigeria—maintained himself, his court and his wealth as best he could from year to year, without concerning himself with the welfare of the general community. There was evident prosperity in many parts, because Nature had so bountifully endowed these lands and the Hausa population was really industrious; but, on the other hand, the benefits to be derived from the

gifts of Nature and the works of man were frequently sacrificed by the incompetence and weakness of the governing families.

Of the first negro state seen by Barth he says the vegetation and crops were abundant, the villages neat and prosperous, cotton weaving was common, "the whole country had an interesting and cheerful appearance, villages succeeding each other with only short intervals of thick underwood, manifesting everywhere the unmistakable marks of the comfortable, pleasant sort of life led by the natives . . . the dwellings shaded with spreading trees and enlivened with groups of children, goats, fowls, pigeons and, where a little wealth had been accumulated, a horse or a pack-ox. The inhabitants were of cheerful temperaments, bent upon enjoying life, rather given to women, dance and song, but without any disgusting excess." This state had not yet been conquered by the Fulani when Barth traversed it in the company of a caravan of 3700 camels carrying salt to Kano. On nearing the capital, "almost all the people who met us saluted us most kindly and cheerfully; and I was particularly amused by the following form of salutation: *God bless you: gently, gently: how strange!* Only a few proud Fulani very unlike their brethren in the West, passed us without a salute . . . the villages are here scattered about in the most agreeable and convenient way, as farming villages ought always to be, but which is practicable only in a country in a state of security." He estimated the population of Kano city at 30,000, of whom 4000 were Fulani, and did not think that the latter governed this particular city oppressively, though the possession of wealth and comfort during two generations had impaired their characteristics and made them cowardly and incapable of protecting

the villages at a distance from the city. The city walls and fortifications (kept in the best repair) enclosed an immense area of ground, in order that a supply of corn for the inhabitants might be grown during a long siege; the market was immensely crowded, the export of cotton cloth, dyed with indigo, being prodigious. "If we consider that this industry is not carried on here, as in Europe, in immense establishments, degrading man to the meanest condition of life, but that it gives employment and support to families without compelling them to sacrifice their domestic habits, we must presume that Kano ought to be one of the happiest countries in the world; and so it is as long as its governor, too often lazy and indolent, is able to defend its inhabitants from the cupidity of their neighbours."

From the principal city in Hausaland to Kuka, the capital of Bornu, the journey was made along paths from village to village, as there is no such thing as a direct road. On the border of these two empires predatory excursions were the order of the day, and, as Barth happened to make the journey twice, he records:

"We had a most interesting and cheerful scene of African life in the open, straggling village of Kalimari, where numerous herds of cattle were being watered at the wells; but how melancholy, how mournful became the recollection of the busy, animated scene which I then witnessed when, three years and a half later, as I travelled again through this district, the whole village, which presented such a spectacle of happiness and well-being, had disappeared, and an insecure wilderness, greatly infested by robbers, had succeeded to the abode of man."

The difference of type between the Hausa and the

black of Bornu became marked as Barth crossed the frontier, the former being of lively spirit and cheerful countenance, the latter melancholy and brutal, with broad face, wide nostrils and large bones. Yet in a bygone age Bornu held the headship of an immense empire, including Kanem, Bagirmi and other states; and its Sultans still maintained the outward show of barbaric splendour which Clapperton described. But, as Barth relates, it was in the fifties in full decadence. "The condition of the finest part of the country is a disgrace to its present rulers, who have nothing to do but transfer thither a few hundreds of their lazy slaves and establish them in a fortified place, whereupon the natives would immediately gather round them and change this fine country from an impenetrable jungle into rich fields, producing not only grain, but also immense quantities of cotton and indigo."

Arrived in Kuka, Barth was well received by the Vizier, allotted a spacious abode near the palace and introduced to the learned men of the place, with whose help he obtained access to the chronicles of the Kings dating from the ninth century. Thus he succeeded in sending to Europe a copy of the abridgment of the whole history of Bornu from the earliest times down to Ibrahim, the last offspring of the royal family, who was on the throne when the previous English expedition visited Kuka. From this it appears that in the thirteenth century the Prince of Kanem wielded the strength of a vigorous empire and extended his influence to the Dongola province of Egypt. His reign was succeeded by civil wars and regicides, which ended in the seat of power being transferred to Bornu by the conquering tribe, who reduced Kanem to a province. On the whole the sixteenth century was the most glorious period of the Bornu empire, adorned as it was by two

capable Sultans. Then followed a quiet period during which pious and peaceful kings occupied the throne, and old age seemed gradually to gain on the kingdom ; the last blow fell when the Fulani occupied the centre of the country in 1809, and a stranger of Arab descent founded a new dynasty.

About the Vizier (Prime Minister) in 1851 Barth has much to say. He was a charming, cultivated and amiable gentleman, but so fond of the other sex that he possessed a harem of between three and four hundred slaves.

"In assembling this immense number of female companions for the entertainment of his leisure hours he adopted a scientific principle ; in fact, a credulous person might suppose that he regarded his harem only from a scientific point of view, as a sort of ethnological museum—doubtless of a peculiarly interesting kind—which he had brought together in order to impress upon his memory the distinguishing features of each tribe. I have often observed that, in speaking with him of the different tribes of negroland, he was at times struck with the novelty of a name, lamenting that he had not yet had a specimen of that tribe in his harem, and giving orders at once to his servants to endeavour to procure a perfect sample of the missing kind. I must also say that, notwithstanding the great number and variety of the women who shared his attention, he seemed to take a hearty interest in each of them : at least, I remember that he grieved most sincerely for the loss of one who died in the winter of 1851. Poor Haj Beshir ! He was put to death in the last month of 1853, leaving seventy-three sons alive, not counting the daughters and the number of children which may be supposed to die in such an establishment without reaching maturity."

That is one side of Arab life, in the days of its decadence; but if we desire to be impartial, we shall not pass judgment on this phase without also considering what conditions Arab civilisation replaced; and above all we shall guard against the error of applying to negro states the standards of twentieth century England. Conceive then the sort of life led by the weltering masses of Central Africa during the centuries previous to Arab conquests; how they lived, propagated and died, shut off from any sort of elevating influence, unlettered, absorbed in the worship of a disgusting local fetishism, practising horrible forms of human sacrifices and rejoicing in such unmentionable cruelties as only a witch-doctor can invent. That such was roughly the state of negroland before its religious awakening may be inferred from our knowledge of those tribes amongst whom Mohamedanism is to this day unknown. The author has dwelt amidst such tribes, and knows that the picture as drawn above is not exaggerated. But, having accorded a full measure of praise to the Mohamedan conquerors who lifted the Sudan from disorganised confusion to comparative civilisation, it must be remembered that their aspirations were and are strictly limited, and that they are not capable of further progress alone.

Meanwhile the days of the white slaver's iniquities are passed, and the days of Mohamedan potentates are numbered. For the nineteenth century witnessed a complete change in the attitude of mind of the white man towards the blacks; and thus it may come to pass that the European will in the future atone for the injury which he inflicted in former times. In India, Egypt, and the Egyptian Sudan, Great Britain is accomplishing a splendid work of regeneration. Its benefits are now extended to Nigeria, where an

even greater success may be predicted. For the rule of the British Administrator promotes the interests of the governed to a far greater extent than anything previously dreamed of by any native prince during the centuries which have gone before.

We will now deal with the acquisition of Nigeria by the British, and describe Vandeleur's share in the work of a successful expedition.

CHAPTER V

THE ACQUISITION OF BRITISH NIGERIA

See map facing page 120

THE story of our West African colonies during the decade 1884 to 1895 cannot be studied without a feeling of pained wonder at the blindness of British Cabinets and of hearty admiration at the foresight and wisdom of the Governments of France and Germany and now that the story is ten years old and nearly forgotten it may not be out of place to review our mistakes and realise the necessity of vigilant watchfulness in other remote parts—as for instance in the Far East—before it is too late.

In the previous chapter a sketch of Sudan history was outlined from the ninth century to 1855, when it was visited by Barth under the auspices of Lord Palmerston. He travelled through the country and recorded his observations in a readable book, which was nevertheless left unread by the Ministers responsible for British interests in those parts. Their ignorance of the Sudan, with such a mass of verified evidence available, affords but a feeble excuse for the apathy which deprived us of many rich provinces, and we may well ask why British Ministers should be unaware of what was well known to French and German statesmen? In order to realise how much our colonies were neglected it is only necessary to study maps which show European possessions in Africa in 1884

and 1902 respectively.* They illustrate more completely than pages of letterpress the results of the scramble for Africa between the years in question, and are specially instructive as regards the West Coast, where Great Britain sat still and looked on whilst France filched from her the hinterlands of her colonies of Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, and Germany ousted her from the Cameroons.

It would be foolish to reproach these two Powers; their actions were legitimate and reflected credit on the statesmen who conceived and the officials who carried out their policy. The oft-repeated statement that they are incapable of managing negro colonies is not borne out by facts. The truth is that, whilst we in England were wrangling over Home Rule for Ireland, the French and Germans were actually establishing their rule in Africa. They accomplished a task which we neglected, in spite of our prior occupancy and boasted Imperialism, and are fully entitled to the reward of their labours and the success of their enterprise. With admirable foresight and courage French officers undertook the exploration of a continent, made treaties with hundreds of native rulers, now subjects of the Republic, extended her frontiers in all directions, took care to establish themselves at the back of each of our West African possessions, and this in spite of our salaried local governors, who were aware of the encroachments, but were not permitted to interfere for fear of hurting foreign susceptibilities. Practically nothing was done to safeguard our interests during this period of *laissez faire*, so fatal to the traditions of a governing race, so costly when the consequences are recognised and have to be remedied.

* See two maps at end of book.

In 1865 a "strong" Committee of the House of Commons unanimously resolved "that all further British extension of territory or assumption of government or new treaty offering protection to native tribes would be inexpedient," and this policy held the field for years. It was dictated not by feelings of magnanimity or humanity, but "through craven fears of being great," and was a direct encouragement to foreign aggression—especially German—about which a few remarks will not be out of place in these pages. Prince Bismarck at first treated our Government with forbearance and scrupulous consideration when he commenced to found a German colony in South West Africa, but he grew tired of our unbusinesslike methods and peevish complaints, and adopted a different procedure with regard to his second venture; indeed, the story of his acquisition of the Cameroons deserves to be told as a sample of British ineptitude. The Cameroon Mountains (13,000 feet high) happen to possess the only salubrious climate near the West Coast of Africa, and other ranges of high altitude and fertility are found in the interior of the province. In 1864 Burton raised the British flag unofficially over a portion of these hills, foreseeing the future value of a climate so suitable for European habitation. Mission and trading stations were established, but not formally acknowledged by our Government, though they proved of such benefit to the neighbouring tribes that the chiefs along the coast petitioned to be included in the British settlement. Their prayers remained unanswered when sent through the Consul, so at last, in 1879, five of the Cameroon Kings ventured to write the following letter direct to Queen Victoria:

"We, your servants, have joined together, and

thought it better to write you a nice long letter which will tell you about our wishes. We wish to have your laws in our territories. We want to have every fashion altered; also we will do according to your Consul's word. Plenty wars here in our country. Plenty murder, and plenty idol-worshippers. Perhaps these lines of our writing will look to you as an idle tale. We have spoken to the English Consul plenty times about having an English Government here. We never have answer from you, so we wish to write to you ourselves. When we know about Calabar River, how they have English laws in their towns, and how they have put away their superstitions, oh, we shall be very glad to be like Calabar River."

The British residents, had they been consulted, could have proved that the peace of the Calabar River and the insecurity of the rest of the country accounted for the Kings' desire for a change, yet four years elapsed and it was not till 1883 that the Foreign and Colonial Offices decided to place the Cameroons under the British flag, and even after this decision had been reached months were allowed to slip before action was taken. On May 16, 1884, Consul Hewett was instructed to proclaim the formal annexation, but this official proved no swifter than his superiors, and was beaten on the post by a German under the following circumstances. On April 20, or a month before the British Colonial Office gave any instructions, Lord Granville received a communication from the German Embassy in London which ought to have aroused the energy of a Secretary of State who had quite recently been deprived of South West Africa by Bismarck. He was informed that Dr. Nachtigal had been "commissioned to visit the West Coast of Africa in a gun-

boat, and conduct negotiations connected with certain questions on behalf of Germany" ; and he was further requested "to cause the authorities in the British possessions to be furnished with suitable instructions." In reply an assurance was given that the British Colonial authorities would be enjoined to give all possible assistance to the German envoy. Accordingly the *Mowe*, with Dr. Nachtigal on board, accompanied by the *Elizabeth*, anchored off the Los Islands (*British*) and proceeded past the Gold Coast (*British*) to Togoland, where the German flag was hoisted on July 2. Togoland has since become one of the most flourishing little colonies in Africa, and proves beyond doubt that Germans are not incapable of founding a paying colony.

After this easy success the *Mowe* steamed on to the Cameroons, where everything had been prepared by the four German traders settled in the place. At midnight meetings, arranged with the native Kings, who were tired of waiting for their reply from Great Britain, treaties were negotiated and signed handing over the whole country to German protection, and Consul Hewett, who had been the reverse of prompt, arrived on the scene five days after the German flag had been hoisted conspicuously over what was all but a British colony. Under German management the Cameroons have since developed into a valuable possession, with a hinterland extending to Lake Chad, deliberately cutting off British extension towards the Nile. The event was hailed with paroxysms of delight in Germany, whilst in England futile reproaches were heaped upon the Gladstone Ministry for its indifference to British interests. But, after all, the Cabinet only reflected the prevailing spirit in the Houses of Parliament, a spirit which had sat down under Majuba three

years previously, and which Bismarck had gauged before he sent Dr. Nachtigal out in the *Mowe*. In the end Bismarck paid £4000 for our Cameroons Mission Station of forty years' growth, whereas we pocketed a humiliation, condoned a piece of sharp practice and meekly acknowledged German sovereignty.

From such an episode it is pleasant to turn to the neighbouring province of Nigeria, and dwell upon the services rendered to his country by one man—Sir George Goldie—who, fortunately for England, was free from the blighting control of a British Cabinet. Even as Cecil Rhodes added Rhodesia to our Empire, Goldie gave us Nigeria, and of the two Nigeria is the more valuable, and was the more difficult to acquire. George Taubman Goldie, born in the Isle of Man, son of the Speaker of the House of Keys, was educated at Woolwich, and held a commission for a short time in the Royal Engineers. He subsequently took to travelling in Africa, and first visited the Niger in 1877. With true insight he perceived the potential value of this great river and devoted his life and abilities to securing it for his country.

It had been explored by MacGregor Laird in 1832, by British gunboats in 1841 and by Baikie in 1854, but the withdrawal of the parliamentary grant and the destruction of Lokoja by the natives caused the abandonment of all enterprise in this region, and Goldie only found a few rival traders conducting a precarious business, without intelligence or knowledge of the markets of Hausaland. His first step was to induce the British to amalgamate their interests and form themselves into a trading company, which under his management became in two years a concern with a capital of £125,000, and was pressing for a royal charter. This was refused on the ground of insuffi-

ciency of capital, so Goldie set to work to increase the amount to £1,000,000, and at last in 1886 the charter was granted, together with governing rights over Hausaland and Bornu. In 1887 the K.C.M.G. was bestowed upon this able administrator, and he became a viceroy in fact, though not in name, a viceroy whose dominion must needs be created from the foundations upwards, in the face of persistent rivals backed by the purses and diplomacy of two European Powers. The measure of his success compared with that of our other coast colonies can be seen on the map and judged from the annual reports on this tit-bit of Northern Africa; the story of how he accomplished his ends has not yet been given to the public. All that we know of this strong and patient man during his twenty years' task on the Niger is that he succeeded. French officers openly occupied several of his outlying districts; German civilians, such as Herr Flegel, accepted British hospitality in order to steal a march on their entertainers and occupy territory behind their backs; but Goldie triumphed over all, and on January 1, 1900, handed to the British Government the provinces which he acquired. The difficulties he surmounted in London, Berlin and Paris, without mentioning those in Africa, would fill a whole volume, but he alone could write it with accuracy.

Meanwhile, owing to the fact that Vandeleur was employed during the most important military expedition conducted by Sir George, we possess a detailed description of the operations and are afforded a glimpse of how he set about his work. I refer to the first expedition against the Fulani, which resulted in our dominion over Hausaland. It illustrates how forethought should be applied to soldiering, in order to accomplish great ends with small means; it was a

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conspicuous success, though it might have been merely a "regrettable incident;" and I propose to relate its story as recorded by Vandeleur, who took a prominent part in it. In October 1896, Sir George Goldie's plans were matured and he was in London, selecting officers for active service in Nigeria. Vandeleur, recently returned from Uganda with a good record, was just the sort of man he wanted, so the formalities were quickly got through and, overjoyed at this unexpected prospect of more fighting, the young Guardsman embarked at Liverpool with other special service officers on November 28. Amongst them were his friends Major Cunningham and Leutenant Cecil Pereira of the Coldstream Guards. He had on this occasion an additional motive for the keen interest he always took in a campaign in that Sir George had recommended him to the *Times* as its correspondent with the expedition.

The voyage was eventless and dreary, a monotonous succession of stoppages and delays at various West African ports, and it was not until December 26 that the ss. *Coomassie* dropped anchor in the Forçados River, the most westerly branch of the Niger delta. The whole coast is here intersected by creeks, backwaters and tiny channels, choked and veiled by endless mangrove swamps, through which the Niger oozes and trickles to the sea in an ignominious fashion.

The expedition was due to start from the headquarters of Northern Nigeria, at the beginning of January 1897, so the officers on the *Coomassie* were but just in time. They found a steam launch waiting to convey them up the river to Lokoja, an important town built at the junction of the Niger and Benué, the military headquarters of the Protectorate. The place was full of life and activity in view of the coming

campaign, and numerous stern-wheeled steamers were moored to the river bank receiving their supplies of rations and reserve ammunition, though nothing as regards equipment and organisation had been left to chance or to the last moment. Sir George Goldie had bent his energies towards perfecting the organisation of a fighting force during several years, offering us an example of how brains and money can be economically applied to military policy, and a contrast to the makeshifts of British Cabinets, drifting into war yet preaching peace.

Here Vandeleur learned the objective of the expedition, which had hitherto been kept a profound secret even from the officers engaged. It was to be directed against the powerful State of Nupe, situated on both banks of the Niger north of Lokoja, a dependency of the Fulani Empire. The Emir of Nupe, himself a Fulah, had sent emissaries from his capital, Bida, to the neighbouring Emir of Ilorin and the King of Busa, to persuade them to join forces with him in order to turn the white men out of the country. The King of Busa declined, preferring to hold to his treaty with the British company, and had even gone so far a to denounce the conspiracy to Sir George Goldie. The latter saw that a trial of strength between the Mohamedan rulers and himself was at last inevitable—it had been pending for eighteen years—and wisely decided to prove in a decisive manner who should be master.

Hitherto the company, although it had engaged in trade with the natives and forestalled French enterprise by concluding treaties with the Sultans of Sokoto and Bornu, in reality held its position in the anterior on mere sufferance. European merchandise was welcomed, but British ideas on the subject of slave-raiding were abhorrent to Mohamedan potentates.

To hope that such princelings would perceive the error of their ways and proceed to reform their methods at the bidding of a missionary was an idea which might do duty on an Exeter Hall platform, though nowhere else. The ripe experience of the Governor of Nigeria taught him that progress was impossible till the Fulani had been conquered in at least one battle.

With the means at command it was a daring venture, and when the intention leaked out at home the value of secrecy in England as well as in Nigeria was amply illustrated. Experts (so-called) prophesied the speedy annihilation of the expedition, Little Englanders shouted for its recall, and the press teemed with the kind of advice which produced the abandonment of Gordon in the Sudan and the policy of scuttle whenever any enterprise seemed to involve a risk. Such counsel would have been but too congenial to the Colonial Secretaries of a few years previously, but fell unheeded on the ears of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who fully grasped the duty of accepting some risk in order to further a British interest, and took upon his shoulders the responsibility of backing Sir George's enterprise. Goldie's critics were so far in the right that absolute disaster awaited him if he miscalculated the fighting capability of his enemy or the reliability of his own troops. His forces consisted of Hausas trained and led by British officers. They had been carefully drilled and disciplined for several years, and had distinguished themselves in small encounters with slave-raiders, but had not before met their co-religionists in pitched battle. They were now to be pitted against overwhelming numbers of the very Fulani who had conquered and ruled Hausaland without question for a century. They were therefore, to say the least, untried soldiers, though their British

officers were staking their lives as a guarantee of their competency.

Meanwhile the Emir of Nupe, equally confident in the superiority of his numerous cavalry, had sent 6000 men under his chief general, the Markum Mohamed, to Kabba with the object of striking a blow direct at Lokoja.* His main army he kept at Bida for the defence of the capital and thus divided his force into two parts, separated by the broad Niger and a hundred miles of difficult country. The Governor, informed of this move, decided to interpose his tiny force between the two Nupe armies, defeat the smaller first, and then by rapid marching throw himself against the main body at Bida. The idea was simple, bold and stragetically sound, but the utmost secrecy and despatch were required to carry it out and prevent a junction of the two armies before they could be dealt with separately. Goldie also took care to patrol the Niger with gunboats and launches, to prevent all communication across the river and to frustrate the intended alliance of Nupe and Ilorin. In this, as in other campaigns, the decision having been made and the means provided, mobility became an essential factor in the problem.

The force at his disposal consisted of thirty British officers and non-commissioned officers, and 513 Hausas and Yorubas, commanded by Major Arnold, a young cavalry officer who had devoted his energies to the training and organising of the troops. The flotilla was entrusted to Mr. Wallace, the Agent-General of the Company, a civilian with twenty years' experience of the country, while Sir George Goldie accompanied the troops and directed the plan of campaign. The expedition started by land and water on January 6, 1897.

* See map facing page 120.

The land force was organised in seven companies, each a complete unit, with a maxim attached to it. Seymour Vandeleur commanded the maxim of No. 5 Company, manned as were the rest by Hausas. The artillery consisted of two Whitworth B.L. guns (a twelve- and a nine-pounder) and five seven-pounder light guns, carried by native porters and served in action by three Royal Artillery officers and 59 Hausa gunners. This force, in addition to its offensive operations, had to safeguard the march of 900 carriers, loaded with three weeks' supply of food and ammunition. Owing to the bush and scrub, the first few marches had to be conducted in single file, thus reducing the speed of the column to that of its slowest porter. Two companies formed the advance guard and went on daily to prepare the next night's camping ground ; the remainder undertook the duty of escort to the procession of carriers which from its length and slowness was vulnerable to attack by cavalry, though luckily nothing of the kind was attempted. Each evening strands of wire were stretched round the bivouac at forty yards distance to guard against night attacks, and "surprise" lights were hung up at intervals. These, on being fired, burned clearly for sufficient time to enable the maxims to be turned on the threatened point. The men slept with their rifles close beside them.

The British officers were mounted on wiry little ponies from the interior, and were each allowed a native servant, but their baggage was of the lightest description. Two mallams (priests) accompanied the troops ; prayers were repeated thrice daily ; Mohamedan observances were strictly respected—thus no Fulani could truthfully assert that the white man was perverting the pious Hausa.

It was hot even for tropical Africa as the column marched in a northerly direction to place itself astride the road between Kabba and Bida, a position which was reached without opposition on January 11, at a village called Sura, where a zariba was built to accommodate the bulk of the porters under the protection of one company, commanded by Pereira. The remainder of the force started in the lightest possible order to surprise the Markum's camp at Kabba. Three days of forced marches through beautiful country brought them to the outer walls of the town, but only to learn that the Nupe army had just broken up its camp and marched north-west to rejoin the main body at Bida. It was a bitter disappointment to the troops, who were spoiling for a fight, but Sir George relied on Mr. Wallace's system of steamer patrols to prevent the Markum's army from crossing the Niger; moreover the time could not be considered as altogether wasted. During the marches the men had learned to trust their officers, and confidence, mobility and discipline had improved daily.

The inhabitants of Kabba rejoiced at their deliverance from oppression and none was more demonstrative than the old chief, who had been in receipt of a subsidy from the Fulani for collecting slaves among his own people. With true native caution, however, he refused all tangible assistance to the British, and would not even sell them horses, of which they stood greatly in need. As in his experience no institution had hitherto been permanent, why should he now believe that the Fulani would not return in a week or two? A picturesque review of the troops was held under the walls of the town, Fulah power was declared at an end, and the country formally taken over; the enemy's deserted camp was burned, and by the 16th

the flying column rejoined its supplies, and was enjoying a day of rest, for the long hot marches were beginning to tell on both officers and men.

The scenery had hitherto offered every variety of scrub, grassy plain, thick forest and rocky hills; the country was fertile, dotted with villages and patches of cultivation, chiefly of dhurra (maize), yams, plantain and cotton. A good deal of primitive industry was carried on, especially the weaving of cotton into cloth on ingenious native looms. Here and there, however, sad spectacles of ruin and desolation marked the track of a party of Nupe slave-raiders, of whom the inhabitants showed the greatest terror, though they welcomed the British with confidence. On turning northward a long and trying march led the column over the Jakpana Hills, which here form the watershed between the Middle Niger and Lagos. Owing to absence of water these hills had to be crossed without a halt, and the lava rocks burning under a tropical sun caused suffering to the bare-footed porters.

At last, however, the river again came into view and, passing through villages surrounded by extensive cultivation, the force rejoined the flotilla at Egbon and learned that the gunboats had prevented any contingent of the enemy from crossing the stream.

Thus, in spite of a minor disappointment at Kabba, the original plan held good, and preparations were made for the advance on Bida, distant twenty-five miles from the river. After the crossing, an unfordable creek running parallel to the Niger was no insuperable obstacle, as with the aid of some canoes and a steel boat the troops were safely ferried across, but a swamp just beyond proved a more serious difficulty and indeed nearly wrecked the success of the

expedition. The two heavy guns now became the problem of the day. To leave them behind might involve failure to breach the walls of Bida, to drag them by manual labour through a swamp in face of an enemy involved delay and necessitated an undesirable subdivision of the small force. Meanwhile, information derived from captured natives pointed to desperate fighting by the Nupes in defence of their capital. It was decided after consideration to run a risk and temporarily divide the force, so Cunningham was sent on with two companies, including Vandeleur's, whilst the remainder escorted the guns and porters.

Pushing rapidly forward the advance guard, accompanied by Sir George Goldie, made a long march into a country which changed its character, cultivation giving place to open undulating downs with gentle folds and here and there a village or farmstead nestling amongst some trees. It seemed admirably adapted to the enemy's cavalry tactics. After crossing a wide ravine and ascending a slope, the advance-guard suddenly beheld the Nupe army drawn up in its thousands on a wide front, flanked by large bodies of white-robed horsemen. Major Arnold now came up with a reinforcement of two companies and decided to continue the advance in order to distract the enemy's attention from our line of carriers and slow-moving guns in rear. The little body of Hausas in their khaki uniforms and red tarbooshes carried out the movement with deliberation and coolness under a galling fire from the enemy's advanced marksmen, who disputed every yard of the ground. But their volleys and maxim fire told with effect on the Nupes, who gave ground as the force moved steadily forward to the summit of an undulating ridge where a halt was called. Here a full view of Bida city two thousand yards off burst

upon them and they knew that a decisive hour in the destiny of Nigeria was at hand.

The scene was worthy of the occasion and deeply impressed Vandeleur and the few British officers who were present. The town, containing from 70,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, stretched as far as the eye could reach, a mass of lofty thatched roofs and clay walls encircled by a massive crenalated outer wall on which stood a throng of citizens, the spectators of a struggle which should decide whether British or Fulani were to be their future masters. In front, brilliantly robed Emirs trotted at the head of their retainers, horse and foot, and the air resounded with the roar and din of an army drawn up for battle.

Clearly the little knot of 250 Hausas on the ridge, who, be it remembered, constituted half the entire force, could not venture on an attack, nor could they remain where they were without water. Meanwhile, in spite of occasional outbursts from our Maxims, the enemy interpreted the halt as a confession of weakness, an invitation to attack. They therefore started a forward move in extended line with enveloping flanks. But the British officers, keenly on the watch, formed the well-drilled companies, by word of command, into square at the double, and then slowly retired in steady ranks to avoid being cut off from the ravine.

Instantly the whole Nupe army raised a mighty shout of enthusiasm and bore down upon the square, surrounding it on all sides. The moment was critical; the smallest mistake, the slightest panic would have brought eager Fulani horsemen charging into our ranks in their thousands, and the day would have ended in a massacre by superior numbers. But the officers kept cool, their men shot steadily at every halt, the square showed no signs of wavering. The Nupe

footmen aimed so high that their bullets for the most part whizzed harmlessly overhead, but the active horsemen on the point of charging home came so dangerously near that frequent halts were necessary to open maxim and seven-pounder fire, in order to clear the path for further retreat. Slowly, gradually and surely the square fought its way back towards the ravine, brushing aside the more adventurous horsemen, keeping others on the flanks at a respectful distance and facing at each halt the threatened rush of the footmen. Of all tactical operations none is more trying than a retirement in the face of a fanatical enemy, none a severer test of nerve and discipline; and it was with intense relief that at last Arnold and his officers approached their bivouac at the ravine and found its supplies and reserve ammunition intact. Here they could halt near water and defy attack.

It was now 2.30 P.M.; the advance-guard had been marching and fighting since dawn; the men were hungry and tired, but were still threatened by a host of twenty to thirty thousand of the enemy, and rest was not possible. The seven-pounders had fortunately arrived at the front and were busily employed in preventing the cavalry from working round the flanks to the immediate rear, a task which they successfully accomplished, though their accuracy was moderate and their range limited. However, their moral effect was far greater than their execution, and Arnold felt strong enough to detach two of his companies to the rear, in order to reinforce the escort of the heavy guns, on which the success of the expedition depended. They were not yet in sight and nothing had been heard of them, but soon after 4 P.M. the nine-pounder was dragged into camp, and matters assumed a brighter aspect.

The first shell, aimed with precision at long range, landed among a clump of horsemen in a village and scattered them in all directions, amidst loud cheers from the camp. After a few more shells of a similar kind the enemy with one accord drew off to Bida, carrying their dead and wounded with them. It was an unexpected but welcome relief, which the British officers only understood next day when they learnt that one of the first shells burst amongst the Agaie division, allies of the Emir of Bida, killing their chief and so disheartening the contingent that it departed homewards the same night.

It was dusk when the advance-guard sat down to a meal after twelve hours' fighting, and quite dark before the remainder of the force escorting the twelve-pounder reached camp, amid cheering and bugle-playing. This gun, by means of a compass-bearing, was aimed in the dark at the city of Bida, elevated to its extreme range (5400 yards) and fired—more as a relief to the feelings of the officers and a defiance to the enemy than for any practical purpose. As luck would have it, this single shell fell in the town and burst near the palace, causing considerable commotion and alarm. Thus did the heavy artillery compensate for the risk involved in the subdivision of the force during twelve hours of critical work.

When morning broke, after a night spent in firing rockets to keep the enemy at a distance, the force, including loaded carriers and heavy guns, crossed the ravine and formed into square on the slope beyond —porters in the centre, heavy guns in the front face, maxims at the corners. Slowly this unwieldy square crept forward, tightly packed, a solid mass of men occupying a tiny space of ground. The Fulani cavalry swept round to threaten the rear, but this time the

British were a compact force with no rearguard, and had the added prestige of advancing to the attack. The fighting was in fact a repetition of that of the previous day, and would be tedious to describe in detail. Riflemen in bushes and horsemen in the open delayed the square, but it reached the ridge with a few casualties, including Sir George's servant shot dead at his side, and beheld the Nupe army drawn up on the opposite slope. The guns came into action and soon cleared the ground, masses of the enemy retiring into the town by its several gates in order to line the wall, others sheering off to some high ground to the west. So the force moved on to within half a mile of the city, took up a defensive position on a rising piece of ground near some water, and commenced the bombardment. About this time the Emir of Bida was wounded in the arm as he stood near the western gate in a crowd of horsemen, and the moral effect of our shells spread dismay amongst the enemy; moreover, the thatched roofs of Bida, scorched dry by a tropical sun, were soon blazing in all directions. Thus the fighting men on the outer wall who had opened a well-sustained fire were now hotly engaged with our volleys, maxims and guns, and were also threatened by a conflagration in rear. They wavered, and finally abandoned the defence of the city. By midday the whole Nupe army was in full retreat through the town, dispersing into the country beyond, and the place stood at the mercy of the conquerors.

Camp was pitched outside, a meal cooked, and later in the day the officers marched their troops through the city, when they realised for the first time its immense extent (three miles by two and a half) and were fully impressed with the danger which street fighting would have entailed, accompanied as it always is by loss of

discipline and temptations to loot, which no African troops can resist. The moral effect of the heavy guns had obviated a costly assault on the outer wall and hand-to-hand scuffles in the streets.

After one day's halt to rest the troops and encourage the inhabitants to resume their usual occupations, the force took up quarters in the palace in the heart of the city, and proclamations were issued declaring Fulani rule and slavery at an end. The British flag was hoisted over the place, reconnaissances were undertaken into the surrounding country, and soon the trading population learned that they would be more secure under our rule even though the old currency, slaves, was abolished. Some members of the reigning family came in to surrender, and finally the Markum was appointed Emir with power to rule the State under British supervision. Thus the whole of Nupe was freed from oppression, confidence was restored, commerce encouraged and the last report of the country's progress shows how beneficial the expulsion of the old rulers has proved. Having established a native government to replace the old one the expedition returned to the Niger.

Writers on military operations are sometimes obliged—by way of illustration—to institute comparisons between one campaign and another, and to draw deductions therefrom. In this connection the Bida expedition has been likened " to the historic battle of Plassey, whereon the foundation of the Indian Empire was laid " ; but I do not propose to enter upon this subject beyond suggesting that the inferences to be drawn are obvious. Brains and forethought, unhampered by circumlocution, planned and carried out the whole thing. The criticism that the enemy possessed no field-guns, that he ought to

have rushed the ravine camp early during the first day's fight, that he could have successfully attacked the column on its hundred miles' march from Kabba to Bida is true enough. But in judging of the event one must give weight to many considerations, including the past history of the country, the numbers engaged on both sides, the difficulties of transport and the results achieved. The object of war is neither to kill as many enemies as possible nor to telegraph home a big butcher's bill in one's own force, as is sometimes supposed. At Bida our losses were Lieutenant Thomson and seven men killed, nine men wounded, and one seven-pounder captured by the enemy. In addition Captains Hatton and Anderson and Lieutenants Thorpe, Parker and Musters (he died on the homeward journey) were invalided to England. Thus the achievement was out of proportion to the loss, though the enemy suffered heavily during the first day's fight. From start to finish the expedition occupied one month.

A commander of native troops may be judged from the point of view of a strategist, a tactician or a humanitarian ; but in any case he *must* be successful. Now the campaign under review was a small masterpiece of strategy; it included a tactical success gained by five hundred men against twenty thousand ; it advanced the cause of humanity by freeing a wide area from slave-raids ; and it ultimately added Hausaland to the British Empire. Surely no Englishman, save those who habitually cry down the British Empire, will complain of such a result !

But before we quit Nigeria to follow Vandeleur's career into other parts, some mention must be made of another expedition in which he was engaged against an important Fulah State named Ilorin, situated sixty miles to the south of the Niger at Jebba (one

hundred miles up stream from Bida). It will have been gathered from what has been said that the Company, with its headquarters at the confluence of two rivers, had, until 1897, been essentially a trading company, with command of the navigable waters but no real authority inland. Based on its steamers and gunboats, the time had come for its land force to carry forward the enterprise, and put the company into touch with the commercial cities of the interior. But it was impossible to bring this about so long as the Fulani impeded all intercourse and clung obstinately to the practice of levying a tribute of slaves. With such magnificent highways of trade as the Niger and Benué flowing through regions inhabited by such intelligent traders as the Hausas, it will always be a remarkable fact that the desirability of sea-power was never grasped by the native mind, and that the navigable rivers were looked upon as obstacles to, rather than promoters of, commerce. In a land where the art of weaving and dyeing rivalled Manchester's best efforts, the art of boat-building had not progressed beyond the dug-out canoe of the ancient Briton.

The British introduced a new conception by depending on river-power. Now, with increasing prosperity and the fear of German and French encroachment—a French force actually occupied Busa (250 miles within the British frontier as laid down by treaty) during the Bida campaign—the time had come to take action on land. Bida in January, was the first step, Ilorin a month later was the second; together they consolidated the whole region south of the Middle Niger, and on the north opened a road to Hausaland and the Fulani Empire—the road which in 1903 enabled Sir Frederick Lugard to complete the conquest of Nigeria.

We will therefore close this chapter with an account

of the Ilorin expedition, derived from Vandeleur's copious materials. During previous years the Governor had made several ineffectual attempts to arrive at a friendly understanding with this Fulah Emir, and on one occasion offered to ride to the capital and personally settle the frontiers beyond which slave-raids into Lagos would no longer be permitted. But the weak Emir, though half inclined to agree to the proposal, was overruled by his own military chiefs, called Beloguns, who could not conceive the possibility of defeat by the British and were unwilling to forego their privilege of making expeditions, involving no risk to themselves, against neighbouring pagans. In the hope, however, that the sharp lesson just read to the more powerful State of Nupe might modify the overweening confidence of the Beloguns and their thousand horse and five thousand foot, Sir George sent messengers to explain the altered situation and press for a peaceful settlement of the frontier. But the military caste in Ilorin, not unlike similar bodies in other parts of the world, held foreign peoples in supreme contempt and had to suffer the consequent humiliation.

Meanwhile our expedition, consisting of fifteen officers, 340 men, two seven-pounders, and four maxims, proceeded in steamers up the Niger, and was continuously cheered by the riverside villagers, who kept running along the banks in a state of wild excitement, dancing and singing to testify their joy at the defeat of the Fulani.

At Jebba, the limit of uninterrupted navigation, the force landed and marched inland towards Ilorin—at first through a waterless, sandy tract, which reminded Vandeleur of the Haud of Somaliland, and afterwards through a beautiful park-like district where

rolling plains dotted with timber kept an agricultural population in ease and comfort. From the villages, partially hidden beneath luxurious banana groves, the peasants looked out upon the column with curiosity. As the city was gradually approached the rivers and streams became numerous, the villages larger and more frequent, and the whole scene presented an appearance of rich fertility; but here the inhabitants, influenced by their Fulani masters, began to display unmistakable symptoms of hostility. They could be seen peering from behind trees and houses, refusing to acknowledge the friendly shouts of our guides, and, by their general behaviour, warning our experienced officers to be ready for a fight. No shot was fired by either side, though numbers of white-robed cavalry dogged the march of the column, but three miles from Ilorin city the aspect of affairs became so threatening that Arnold halted the advance-guard, and ordered square to be formed as successive detachments came up.

This precaution was but just in time, for a body of 300 to 400 horsemen, following on the heels of our rear-guard, charged home just as the last detachment formed up into the square. On they came, and Vandeleur could not but admire their daring courage as, headed by a Belogun, they made straight for the serried line of bayonets, brandishing their spears over their heads. But here, as at Bida, our Hausas behaved with the coolness born of discipline and success, and justified the confidence of their officers in what proved an exciting moment. Without flinching they received the charge of horse with a steady volley, which emptied many a saddle and caused the enemy to swerve round both flanks of the square. The flanks at once opened fire, completed the rout, and proved, if proof be

needed, that the most gallant and expert horsemen cannot hope to contend with disciplined riflemen. Yet this failure of the horse in no way disconcerted the tactics of the Belogun who had been told off to attack with the men on foot, and the action became general all round the square.

Passing over details our musketry cleared away the more adventuresome natives and enabled the force to advance towards the river whose passage the Ilorins were concentrating to dispute. Here fighting of a desultory kind continued till evening, but the enemy did not again venture upon an attack, and at nightfall fell back to a position in rear. Accordingly camp was formed by the river, as it was too late to enter the city and, moreover, it was hoped that by giving time for the news of the day's fighting to spread, further bloodshed might be avoided on the morrow. The little force lay down to rest on the battlefield, under a brilliant moon on a cold night, illumined by fiery rockets discharged from the square and a huge circle of grass fires lighted by the natives. Every precaution against a night surprise was taken, as the enemy was still busy and had dragged out an old cannon which threw a projectile that moved like a frightened rabbit over sandy ground. Men also came down to shout imprecations and threats at the picquet, and about midnight a false alarm caused the troops to stand to arms, except one officer who slept soundly through the noise.

Next morning, under cover of a mist, our men resumed their advance towards the town, and, when the sun rose, opened with seven-pounders on the enemy's last position outside its walls. Their demoralisation was then seen to be complete, for they began to bolt in driblets, and a little later the white flag was dis-

played over a gateway as a signal of submission. A halt was called, firing ceased on both sides and later in the day our victorious troops paraded in Ilorin and established themselves on the market square.

The city was found to be larger than Bida though of similar character, and our first duty was to restore order and stop looting by runaway slaves. The Emir and four Beloguns had fled to a neighbouring village with a few adherents in a sorry plight ; hearing of their condition, Sir George sent to try and induce them to come in and surrender unconditionally. His embassy was successful, and the Emir and Beloguns, mounted on their horses covered with picturesque saddle cloths, and followed by their personal attendants, were ushered ceremoniously into the square where the troops were drawn up beneath the British flag. Here they threw themselves on their knees before the Governor in an attitude of utter submission—being evidently apprehensive of what might be their fate. Still the fact of their coming in when they might easily have escaped showed a degree of confidence in British methods which they would not have displayed to their own co-religionists, and was satisfactory evidence of our prestige. The treaty to be signed was at once read out and carefully explained. It recognised Ilorin as being henceforth subject to Great Britain instead of to Sokoto ; it enacted that gin and rum were to be immediately destroyed wherever found ; it stipulated that war was never to be undertaken without the previous consent of the Governor ; and it reinstated the Emir as the British representative. The whole party was obviously relieved when these clauses were understood, and willingly affixed their signatures in Arabic. After the ceremony the Governor had a private interview with the Emir who retired with

dignity and pleasure at so easily escaping from an unpleasant situation.

It thus came about that a State was lifted from the slough of mediæval oppression and enrolled with the other thriving provinces of our Empire.

The return trip down the Niger was enlivened by some shooting in a burnt-up and rather gameless country. An expedition planned against the Potani, a tribe on the banks of the river, proved unnecessary owing to the submission of their ruler, so Vandeleur and the other special service officers embarked for England in March. Their way lay through Lisbon and Madrid, where they visited the picture galleries and saw "a sickening bull-fight." Recognition for his services awaited Seymour at home. He was highly commended in official despatches, and although only twenty-seven and still a subaltern, was noted for future promotion to the rank of Brevet-Major directly he became a captain.

The scene of his activities now shifted to different surroundings. He was appointed aide-de-camp to Major-General Lord Methuen commanding the Home District. Inspections and reviews were the order of the day coupled with the military arrangements for the Diamond Jubilee Procession. That memorable event was no holiday for those concerned with its success, and with his personal acquaintance of Empire-making the assembly of the Queen's subjects from all parts had more meaning for Vandeleur than for most. Nay, he furnished a practical illustration of the brotherhood of Empire, for at an inspection of Colonial troops he recognised several Hausas with whom he had served in Nigeria and among them a man of his own gun detachment.

A pleasant autumn was spent in Norway where his

NIGERIA

NORTHERN NIGERIA
SOUTHERN NIGERIA
BIGHT OF BENIN
SLAVE COAST
REFERENCE
Lieut. Vandeleurs March in red dotted lines 27th Dec. 1896 to 7th March 1897.
Longitude East 4° of Greenwich
8°
12°
English Statute Miles
50 0 50 100
Stanford's Geogl Estabt London

father hired a river abounding in sea-trout. Reindeer-stalking was also to be had, so Seymour got together a camp kit and started on a three days' expedition. After eleven hours of such walking and mountaineering as he had never known before he brought down two buck, one with a very fine head.

As regards the military future Vandeleur was fully determined to secure the first vacancy in the Egyptian Army, in fact Major-General Hunter had promised his help in the matter. For this reason he refused what might otherwise have been an attractive offer of the post of Deputy-Assistant Commissioner in the Central African Protectorate. Meanwhile he devoted himself to bringing out a book on his experiences in Uganda and Nigeria, and he was hard at work on it when, on Christmas Eve, 1897, a telegram arrived offering him service in the Egyptian Army if he could start at once. Twenty-four hours later he left Charing Cross for Cairo, and by dint of incessant writing on board the mail boat he was able to send back the finished manuscript of his volume from Port Said. It was published under the title "Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger," and was very favourably received.

There is no doubt that he intended, had he lived, to publish his further military experiences, and those who now have the task to perform can fully realise how far more interesting they would have been from his own pen.

CHAPTER VI

ENGLAND ON THE NILE

[*See general map of Egypt and the Egyptian Sudan*]

CONSIDERATIONS of space and the limited scope of this volume unfortunately forbid an excursion into the fascinating study of ancient Egypt and the curious history of the dwellers by the banks of the Middle Nile. Their story has not yet been written in popular form and those who seek acquaintance with it must meanwhile grope for the facts in works which are difficult to understand without personal experience of the Nile valley. Other lands alter, but the Sudan remains a region of ingrained conservatism, pervaded by a distinct flavour of the Old Testament, where English officials who have acquired some fluency in Arabic come daily in contact with customs, modes of thought and turns of expression which remind them of the Bible history they learnt in their childhood. Even the journey of Herodotus, Father of historians, who travelled with an army up the Nile (457 B.C.) might have been written in our own time, so little have the circumstances or the people altered.

But apart from the history of the Sudan in the remote past and the later tales of Sir Samuel Baker and other explorers of the Nile sources, it is advisable that we refresh our memories regarding some of the more recent occurrences connected with the country; otherwise it will be difficult to realise the cause of Lord

Kitchener's campaigns or to follow with intelligence the reason for his operations. Indeed, these occurrences and causes were familiar to Vandeleur, and were so frequently discussed by him during the war, that, if I were to omit them and merely record the doings of this officer on active service I should not present a faithful picture of his life. His work contributed to the success of the wider issues involved, and, had he lived to record his personal experiences, his book would have commanded a special interest by reason of the author's grasp of the situation as a whole. Thus, if I am able in this narrative, to clearly outline the main events I shall be accomplishing that which Vandeleur himself would have done with pleasure.

The Egyptian Sudan with which we are concerned is that portion of the continent which extends southwards from the Assouan Cataract to Fashoda* on the Upper Nile; it embraces the northern deserts between the Red Sea littoral and Darfur, and the luxuriant vegetation of the southern districts lying betwixt the mountains of Abyssinia and the swamps of the Bahr-el-Gazal —a huge extent of country, fertile beyond conception for hundreds of miles along the borders of mighty rivers, barren and remorseless over vast areas of desert and scrub. To imagine that its inhabitants are mere savages, fit victims for maxim guns or missionary enterprise, as may happen to suit the taste of the English public, would be an error; yet this false impression was prevalent during the operations of our army in the field. Men had no leisure to devote to the history or condition of the inhabitants, and thus imbibed during the campaign certain prejudices which it is desirable to dispel regarding a people far removed from savagery; indeed, both Arabs and Blacks are members of an old-estab-

* Fashoda has been renamed Kodok.

lished social order which deserves to be studied and improved, but not abolished.

Here, as in Nigeria and other States of northern Africa, the Mohamedan religion has been for centuries the dominating influence ; but in the Egyptian Sudan, perhaps owing to its proximity to Mecca, the religious note has been more accentuated, the fanaticism more merciless and the sword has claimed a greater number of victims. Consequently, in spite of nearer access both by sea and land, the country has developed neither native industry nor manufacture. It has produced no trade emporium such as Kano in the west and has never utilised its natural resources like Hausaland. Its chief product has been a prodigious crop of Mohamedan teachers and sects, which have in turn worked upon the susceptibilities of emotional and warlike races, fanning their belief in the supernatural, until it may fairly be said that no fable can be too grotesque to obtain credence on the banks of the Nile. Men of such temperament have elsewhere been welded into nations under strong and capable rulers and have then borne an honourable record in history. But until to-day the Sudan has been consistently misgoverned whether by local sheiks or foreign invaders ; each man's hand has been lifted against his neighbour, tribe warring against tribe, yet knowing no better than to endure extortion from the strong and injustice from those in authority. Between the exactions of the Khedive's subordinates and the raids of free-booting slave-dealers, a man's life and property were of small account. Yet this gloomy picture had its bright side and was frequently relieved by deeds of heroism, by magnificent loyalty to local chiefs, by devotion to tribal and family ties and by enthusiastic self-sacrifice. Indeed, to those who will study below the surface of a sea of bloodshed, the key-

note of the people's character will be found in an emotional romanticism of the type of our Middle Ages—a period of chivalrous deeds stained by barbarous crimes. The Middle Ages of the Sudan lasted through the nineteenth century, during which the tribes were subjected to much provocation. They bore with apathy from 1821 to 1881 the burden of conquest by Egyptian pashas and occupation by Egyptian garrisons, in addition to the customary exactions of their own sheiks. In at last freeing themselves from this foreign yoke, they enjoyed for four brief years a delirious period of intoxicating licence under the Mahdi, slaying 40,000 helpless Egyptian soldiers and one great Englishman—Charles Gordon : they successfully resisted invasion by three British military expeditions, which strewed the desert sands with fallen tribesmen but effected no useful purpose whatsoever.

Then followed a period best described as "stewing in their own juice"—juice brewed by the strong for consumption by the weak—a period which commenced with the death of the Mahdi in 1885, and ended at the battle of Omdurman in 1898. During those fourteen dreary years the Sudan was crushed beneath the heel of Baggara tyranny under the one-man rule of the Khalifa Abdullahi, who reduced the population by murder, famine and perpetual fighting from 8,525,000 to 1,870,500.* Whole tribes were wiped out to secure the supremacy of the Baggara ; wide fertile lands reverted to desert because man would not sow what he might not reap : and thus did the survivors suffer for their brief, licentious riot under the victorious Mahdi. The last act of the bloody drama will be described when we deal with Lord Kitchener's campaigns which brought peace to the country ; but meanwhile can any one doubt that

* Lord Cromer's official report, 1904.

the Sudan requires complete rest for two or more generations, under the protection of the first liberal rulers it has ever known? With twenty years' experience to guide our judgment we at last perceive that the problem of Egypt and the problem of the Sudan were after all but one—namely the problem of the Nile—and that England's constant endeavour to sub-divide the whole and curtail her responsibility has been a failure. She may have been wise, from her own point of view, to take only one step at a time, but the great river, flowing placidly over three thousand miles of land, heeds not the makeshifts of timorous man. The Nile has proved more potent than the statecraft of nations, has united peoples whom rulers have attempted to separate and has quietly rejected the theory that several masters can peacefully control its waters. This axiom is writ large across the pages of its ancient and modern history and has been illustrated by events in our own time; is it then too much to ask of British statesmen that they shall acknowledge its truth and firmly maintain the guardianship which England so unwillingly undertook, but so successfully carried out on the banks of the historic river?

The story of England in Egypt has developed into England on the Nile and may now be briefly told.

In 1881 the Mahdi arose to reform the laws and eliminate the incompetent pashas who ruled at Khartoum: in the following year the Egyptian army revolted under Arabi and destroyed the Khedive's authority in Egypt itself. Though almost simultaneous, the two insurrections had nothing in common beyond the frenzied desire of all men for emancipation from the same rotten government, yet, but for England, the fighting hosts of the Mahdi would undoubtedly have swept down the Nile and destroyed Arabi and his undis-

ciplined soldiers. That this was the real intention of the Mahdi and his Khalifa can be proved over and over again by contemporary documents and by studying Wad el Negumi's gallant invasion of Egypt, which ended disastrously for him at the battle of Toski (1889). In fact Arabi's party contained no germ of sufficient strength or capacity to organise a native force fit to protect the native soil, and, if England—heeding the cry of Egypt for the Egyptians—had refrained from occupying Cairo in 1882, she would afterwards have heard the barbarous yell, Egypt for the Mahdi, enforced by Dervish swords throughout the Delta. Fortunately, however, England was firmly seated at Cairo in 1889 and put an end to the Dervish invasion which Egypt under Arabi could certainly not have accomplished.

In connection with the disaffection which we have said was the cause of revolt throughout the land, it may be pointed out that, whereas in civilised states public opinion is believed to control the government, in backward countries prosperity depends on strong individuals at the centre. In eastern parlance, the ruler is the father and mother of the people. Oppression by a capable man like the great Khedive Mehemet Ali will be patiently endured whilst the people are fairly prosperous and foreign exactions are prohibited. He had emancipated Egypt from the Turkish rule first established in the twelfth century, and had governed with intelligent efficiency and strength from 1811 to 1848. In the twenties he had sent his son to conquer the Sudan which he exploited with success. But under feeble successors there arose a horde of foreigners and petty officials who preyed upon all departments of the State. The Khedive was no longer master in his own house, and the dry-rot at the core gradually extended throughout the body politic, until the richest country in the

world for its size fell gradually into the depths of ruin, misery and rebellion. In fact the plight of the Egyptians was comparatively worse than that of the Sudanese tribes. For, when we consider the notorious patience of the fellaheen peasantry and realise that even such men were goaded into insurrection by petty oppression, we obtain some measure of the worthlessness of the Cairo government and some explanation of the prosperity which was developed as soon as it was replaced by British officials.

Meanwhile the government of the pashas, faced with a crisis throughout the land, clung to power in helpless bewilderment and had not the sense to realise the peril of a situation which they had themselves created. The promoters of the revolts both in the Sudan and Egypt were successful beyond their wildest dreams ; the usual excesses were, of course, committed during the period of excitement, and chaos reigned supreme from Fashoda to Alexandria. Every journalist in Europe thoughtlessly cried out that something must be done !

Yet so little were the circumstances understood at the time, that we find British statesmen gravely suggesting that the " unspeakable " Turk whom they wished to deport " bag and baggage " out of Europe in 1877, should in 1882 undertake a civilising mission on behalf of the Great Powers in the Nile valley ! Their serious endeavour in this direction had also its humorous side, inasmuch as they went out of their way to inform Turkey that she must pay for her troops if any of them should be sent into Egypt! The tempting offer was politely declined by the Sultan.

Obviously, prompt action could alone save the situation, yet Lord Granville, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, seemed to think that mere words would

suffice. He accordingly engaged in prolonged negotiations first with France, then with Turkey, then again with France, and finally, with all the Great Powers, trying to induce some of them to restore order in Egypt. They all refused to do it themselves or to help us do it, and Lord Granville's futile despatches remain as a pitiable record of British statesmanship. Fortunately, Queen Victoria from the first displayed the wise political instinct for which she was famous and insisted that the only solution promising happy results would be "undivided English control." This policy was at last adopted. The campaign under Lord Wolseley was completely successful, and Cairo was occupied after an engagement at Tel-el-Kebir in 1882. The consequences were far-reaching, in spite of our Premier's reiterated pledges to evacuate the country, pledges which nobody asked for or expected, but which were nevertheless repeated by his successor. Truly plain men have reason for sometimes doubting whether the country's business is managed with ordinary foresight!

But if there remain a faithful few who still believe that the Cabinet of 1880 to 1885 was capable of directing the business of an oversea Empire, they will surely find conversion in those chapters of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone* which deal with Egyptian and Sudanese affairs. Mr. Morley is not only a sympathetic biographer but also Mr. Gladstone's warmest political admirer, yet even his literary skill is unable to mask the ineptitude of that Statesman's Egyptian policy or his inability to carry out such policy as he had. First he did not want to go to Egypt, then he sent 25,000 men to occupy the country: having done this he longed to withdraw, but was afraid to do it; having consented to stay temporarily in Egypt, he was quite determined

not to be responsible for any part of the Sudan mess: no sooner was this announced than he despatched Charles Gordon and three extravagantly managed expeditions to Suakin and Dongola, costing over £10,000,000 of British money and ending in utter failure, not through the defeat of the soldiers but owing to the fact that, in spite of reiterated warnings that high Nile is the season for ascending the river, British Ministers could not make up their minds to start their expedition till the flood was already sinking. They were, therefore, too late to rescue their own envoy, Gordon, at Khartoum.

Thus within the short space of two years (1882–4) they blundered in their attempts to avoid an expedition and blundered again whenever they feverishly determined to send one. Their one success was the occupation of Cairo, which restored prosperity to Egypt, yet this was the very thing they were thoroughly ashamed of and anxious to abandon. Looking back on the several episodes of this quite recent history one is tempted to ask whether our home administration was after all more competent to deal with the situation than the Egyptian pashas whom it superseded?

By the summer of 1885, having failed to relieve the garrisons, having failed to suppress Osman Digna at Suakin, and still muttering threats of scuttling out of Egypt, British Ministers retired from the scene of their costly and humiliating labours, and handed over the conduct of affairs to the man on the spot—Sir Evelyn Baring, now Lord Cromer.

It was a lucky chance for the Empire that nobody then knew that Lord Cromer was a strong man, otherwise he would not have been selected for an independent post at Cairo. Courageous men are not usually trusted by vacillating ministers, as was proved by the treat-

ment accorded to Sir Bartle Frere—dismissed from his post in South Africa by the Cabinet which appointed Baring to Egypt. But the probability is that the Government, having lost popularity with the electorate, became heartily sick of its own mess on the Nile, and thankfully handed it over to some one else. Be this as it may, Lord Cromer's twenty years' patient statesmanship at Cairo has compensated for the bungling of some of his masters in London.

Thwarted at every turn by the provoking restrictions entailed by a British protectorate which was not a protectorate, but only a temporary occupation, he, nevertheless, managed to rescue the nation from bankruptcy by restoring its prosperity. He augmented the revenues by increasing the country's productiveness; nursed a native army through infancy to manhood; created huge reservoirs for storing and distributing the fertilising flood-water of the Nile to parched deserts; economised on Egyptian budgets an annual sum (£320,000) sufficient to start the Sudan on its new career of prosperity; and at last brought even the most inveterate enemies of the British occupation to acknowledge its value and cease carping at its continuance. The story is no fairy tale, but can be read in *England in Egypt* by Sir Alfred Milner, and in the twenty-four solid blue-books which deal with the subject. It affords a striking example of what the best sort of Englishmen can do, when beyond the sterilising influence of party politics.

From the above brief survey of the general situation let us turn to the work accomplished by our officers.

By the end of 1885 all troops were withdrawn from the Sudan and the country handed over to the tender mercies of the Khalifa. The reformed Egyptian army took over the defence of the frontiers at Wadi Halfa

and Suakin, and commenced that prolonged training for war which enabled it subsequently to defeat the Dervishes in numerous unrecorded skirmishes and in the important actions which reconquered the Sudan. The old Egyptian army, the one which was defeated under Arabi, under Hicks and under Baker, was almost unequalled for cowardice and incapacity; the new army under Grenfell and Kitchener, composed of the same human material, grew to be a model of efficiency in war. It attracted to its ranks every British subaltern and captain who was eager to learn soldiering or ambitious to see active service, and the result of their efforts may be judged by the contrast afforded in the two following official documents:

(1) Extract from General Valentine Baker's telegram describing the action near El Teb in February 1884: "Marched yesterday morning with three thousand five hundred men towards Tokar. . . . On square being only threatened by small force of enemy, certainly less than a thousand strong, Egyptian troops threw down their arms and ran, allowing themselves to be killed without slightest resistance. More than two thousand killed. All material lost."

(2) Extract from Special Army Order (War Office, September 1898) regarding Battle of Omdurman, signed by Field Marshall Viscount Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief: "The rank and file in the army of his Highness the Khedive showed a spirit which reflects the greatest credit on those officers and non-commissioned officers who have so raised the standard of their discipline and military efficiency that they are now worthy to fight alongside European troops; they exhibited not only steadiness in action, but remarkable endurance during two years of prolonged and most arduous labour. . . ."

The above extracts speak for themselves and would require no further words of explanation were it not that certain critics have suggested that, as the Sudanese battalions of the Egyptian army bore the brunt of the recent fighting, the fellaheen remain untested. Now, I am encouraged to record my own testimony on the point by the circumstance that during the campaign I served exclusively with Sudanese troops, and may, therefore, be considered impartial towards the fellaheen. Vandeleur, too, served in a Sudanese battalion, and had a similar opinion regarding the fellaheen. He held that, though the Sudanese might be considered the flower of the army, the fellaheen cavalry, artillery and infantry were absolutely trustworthy troops; and numerous examples of their quality can be brought forward to support this statement. There were no Sudanese artillery or cavalry yet the conduct of the fellaheen throughout the dangerous reconnaissances which they constantly undertook during four years of warfare places them high in the estimation of soldiers. Again the 2nd (fellaheen) Battalion formed an integral part of Macdonald's brigade which happened, at the Battle of Omdurman, to come in for the most desperate of all the fights of the campaign. This battalion had previously been noted for strict discipline, and, on the day of its trial, manœuvred and fired with steadiness under the shock of two tremendous charges, delivered in quick succession from different directions and repelled them both without flinching. Vandeleur who was present during the episode bore testimony to the behaviour of the fellaheen who were warmly praised by General Macdonald himself.

Yet how can it happen that in only fourteen years men's characters can be so essentially altered and im-

proved as to justify the enconiums which I have quoted above? It seems almost more marvellous than some of the other mysteries of Egypt, and yet is perfectly true. Men are made or marred by the treatment to which they are subjected. Let us disclose what that treatment had been in Egypt.

No one will pretend that the fellah is by nature a fighting animal, but he is, nevertheless, capable of being trained to fight by officers whom he respects and believes in, and who themselves come of a fighting race. In the old army such officers were rare, but on the few occasions when they commanded the fellah he fought with pluck as at El Obeid (1883). As a rule, he was ill-used and flogged for petty offences; his pay was intercepted; he was not taught the business of a soldier but generally worked as a slave; his barracks were insanitary, his food poor and no provision was ever made for sick or wounded; the legal terms of his enlistment were disregarded, and he was never allowed to go home on furlough. To be sent to the Sudan meant practically penal servitude for life, and so it was considered by the man and his family. Indeed, so degraded was the profession of arms that it would be difficult to devise a more certain system of destroying the spirit of any man, or knocking the manliness out of any soldier.

The officers, drawn from the class which supplies Egypt with a bureaucracy and boasts a leaven of Turkish blood, were, in no sense, leaders of men. They possessed some intelligence and were fairly well educated, but had no idea of discipline amongst themselves or confidence in one another. They were consumed with the spirit of intrigue, through which alone lay the avenue to promotion and lucrative posts. It did not occur to them either to share in or alleviate the

privations of their men: nor were they under any obligation to accept unnecessary risks either in the hour of battle or the gloom of a cholera camp. In fact, one of the best days for Egypt occurred when the Khedive signed the laconic decree "the army is hereby disbanded." That was in 1882.

The young British officers who subsequently undertook to organise and command the squadrons, batteries and battalions of the new army started the machine with a totally different conception of duty and military service to any which had hitherto prevailed. Indeed, the change was so bewildering to the native officers and men, that at first the task seemed hopeless. However, with stubborn insular determination they persevered on their own lines, without compromise, and without appearing to see any difficulty. Exact pay was handed out to the men on fixed dates; good barracks, solid food and clean clothing were provided; the discipline was strict and carefully enforced; promotion went solely by merit and no intrigue could avail to alter a selection; furloughs were granted each year, and the men went home to their squalid villages smart in appearance and with plenty of money in their pockets. They were no longer ashamed of themselves or their calling. When their term of six years' service expired they left the colours to become local police men. Then came years of active service, first on the lines of communication of Lord Wolseley's Nile expedition, then on the frontier, continuously in touch with Dervishes, unsupported by other troops—with eyes always turned towards the desert and the enemy beyond. At intervals, the Dervishes would attack patrols, or raid villages, and a skirmish would take place, a more or less serious affair, but always a useful experience to an army in training. Two pitched

battles, at Ginnis in 1885 and Toski in 1889, attested the progress of the force. The fellaheen soldier began to feel he was a man, in fact became one. He at last understood his British officers, those curious foreigners who insisted on every one doing his duty without shirking, and who did it themselves! In action there they were always in front, never excited: in cholera camp, still they were present working like slaves to stamp out the pestilence: always cheerful and approachable, yet maintaining their position as officers and the respect due to their rank.

The fellah did not take to fighting for fighting's sake but he no longer feared to go into action, and, in fact, was sure he would win whenever he fought. A story is told of one battalion that the men were more terrified at the wrath of their commanding officer, if one man wavered, than ever they were of a Baggara's spear. Thus the private soldier responded to proper treatment, the Egyptian officer grumbled but did his duty, and the army grew into a formidable force —16,000 men of splendid physique. It also helped to popularise the British occupation throughout the villages of Egypt.

But if British officers have done much for the Egyptian army it is also plain to any one who served in it, that the Egyptian army has done a great deal for British officers. Indeed, it would be almost as difficult to exaggerate, as it certainly is to measure, the benefit our officers derived from service in the Khedive's forces —provided they served for a sufficient period to correct the narrow militarism inculcated at home. We have said that the treatment accorded to the soldiery of the old army was likely to knock the manliness even out of a Samurai, and that a reversal of such methods quickly restored the men's pluck. Just in a similar way the

home training of the British officer before the Boer war was calculated to stifle the most precious qualities an officer can possess—namely, resourcefulness and initiative—qualities which were rekindled and developed directly he joined the Egyptian army.

I am not suggesting that our subalterns, who have much to learn especially as regards discipline and duty during the first years of their service, should be accorded free scope for misdirected initiative or ill-judged experiments; but surely captains of companies and commanding officers of battalions should not be sacrificed to a passion for uniformity which converts them into mechanical automatons, registering the innumerable decrees contained in the thirty-five volumes of regulations which compose every commanding officer's library? Some were too sensible to devote much time to learning up, in peace, regulations which no one could possibly carry out in war, and such were reported as slack by the average staff officer, who was all-powerful and most meddlesome. Though the Aldershot, Curragh and other brigades were, undoubtedly, commanded by able men, it is well known that some of the battalions were practically commanded by the brigade-major, who was encouraged to interfere to an intolerable degree with the commanding officers' work, in order to produce the desired uniformity and insist on the brigadiers' special fads being attended to in season and out of season.

Throughout the army at home the zeal of the regimental officer was thus confined within the narrowest sphere; all his actions were strictly laid down; to deviate to the right or left, or to reverse the order of the prescribed routine was wrong; whether practising a stereotyped attack or digging a regulation shelter-trench, drilling a company or shooting at a target,

every detail was printed in the books, as well as the exact words to be used by the instructor. Nothing was left to the intelligence of the individual, and on re-reading some of the text-books one is obliged to confess that officers were by regulation debarred from exercising either intelligence or common sense. Under such a blighting *régime*, how could regimental officers be expected to develop either initiative or resourcefulness? Their only means of escape from a dreary groove lay in hunting, polo and other games, or in going away on leave as often as they could.

Our later experience is that if you give the British officer sensible work to do he will usually do it extremely well and it was on this principle that the Egyptian army was started and run. To join it after some years of garrison duty at home was like walking into fresh air after a journey on the old underground railway. We have seen how the fellah was raised from the level of a coward to fight in line with European troops, and it is equally easy to understand how his officer resumed in the Sudan qualities which had been stifled in the United Kingdom.

A young captain or subaltern on joining at Cairo usually has a personal interview of five minutes with the Sirdar, during which he is quietly told that he is to start for the Sudan in a couple of days, that on reaching his battalion he should pick up all he can about everything going on at the front, and that his most necessary accomplishment will be a colloquial acquaintance with the Arabic language, without which nobody can be of much use. His rank is bimbashi (major), and his duties are various. He is not given any book of regulations, and, if he asks for one, is informed that some of the English text-books have been translated into Arabic for the use of the army, but that they have long been

out of print—though second-hand ones are sometimes obtainable. Accordingly the budding bimbashi, perhaps a little shocked at the thought of the regulations being out of print and his exact itinerary not being detailed in writing, starts on his long journey to the Sudan by railway, steamboat, camel, and sailing-boat. In course of time he reaches his battalion, usually without his baggage, with the vaguest idea of the whereabouts of his horse and camel and in the mental condition commonly attributed to a lost sheep. But he has already learned one thing thoroughly, namely, that if he does not look after himself and his belongings no one else will do it for him. Thus his new training is well begun, and his days of military dry-nursing are over.

On reporting himself at the front the bimbashi is plunged into a battalion of Arabic-speaking officers, non-commissioned officers and men, of whom none but the commanding officer, the interpreter and three bimbashis can speak or understand the English language. He is introduced to a form of drill similar to that of the British army, but with words of command delivered in Turkish and explanations given in Arabic. He ascertains from his brother bimbashis that, by working hard for six months, he can acquire sufficient fluency in the new language for all practical purposes. So instead of attempting to learn a Turco-Arabic drill-book like a parrot, he perceives that he must confine himself to essentials and first master such simple words of command as he may require if the battalion should be sent into action within a week. In fact, he realises that he must reverse the method commonly adopted of beginning at the beginning, and it dawns upon his mind—now emancipated from the detail of the goose-step and the firing exercise by numbers—that drill

rightly understood and intelligently applied is a factor in winning battles. He is so much the richer by the acquisition of this new idea that his attitude towards the whole art of soldiering takes a practical turn, and he sees real reasons for things which have hitherto seemed tiresome and useless. From this moment his work becomes interesting, and, at the end of six months' probation, he feels he is a better officer and is in daily contact with better officers, because the initiative of each individual has produced the habit of responsible work throughout the force. As time passes, the new bimbashi is employed on numerous jobs, all essential to the continued progress of the campaign, with which he now identifies his own efforts. Whether it be hauling steamers up cataracts, furnishing escorts to gunboat patrols, acting as station-master, postmaster, or supply officer, commanding a squadron, battery, camelry, or a fort, as brigade-major or staff officer—wherever British supervision is required there the bimbashi is to be seen, directing native officers and men, and discharging duties which in European armies are often entrusted to generals. With such varied and continuous employments during the intervals between important actions, is it surprising that, compared with his brother in England, he becomes a handy-man and a distinct personage—useful in peace and invaluable in war ?

If, on the other hand, a bimbashi should fail to profit by the opportunities thus offered, his place can easily be filled by one of the numerous candidates who are longing to take it. The work is hard, the sun hot, fevers are weakening, relaxations are few, but the service is popular, promotion is quick, the pay adequate, and the rewards ample. Moreover, since peace rules in the land, numerous responsible posts are

open to bimbashis, and the service has not lost all the attractions which it held for the ambitious at the time of the campaigns.

If in the foregoing pages I have been able to refresh the reader's memory as to the salient features of the general situation and the conditions under which British officers serve the Khedive, it may be easier in future chapters to tell the tale of Lord Kitchener's operations and describe the part taken in them by Bimbashi Vandeleur. Meanwhile, those of my readers who care for dates will doubtless read the following synopsis, whereas those who dislike them may pass on to the story beyond—

1798, *July* 21.—Battle of the Pyramids and defeat of the Mameluks by Napoleon.

1798, *Aug.* 1.—Battle of the Nile and defeat of the French fleet by Nelson.

1801, *March* 8.—Battle of Aboukir : French evacuate Egypt. British occupy Cairo.

1803.—Egypt evacuated by British.

1811.—Mehemet Ali, an Albanian, massacres the Mameluks in Cairo citadel, and usurps the Pashalik of Egypt from Turkey. He founds a family which still holds the sovereignty. During the years which follow he organises a fighting army, which is so successful under Ibrahim that it constantly defeats large Turkish forces in Syria, and on two occasions has Constantinople at its mercy, but refrains from capturing this capital.

1820.—Mehemet Ali sends his son to conquer and hold the Sudan.

1838.—Mehemet Ali himself visits the Sudan, and organises conquering military expeditions up the White Nile, Blue Nile, and into Kordofan. He converts the

Sudan into a *place d'armes*, imports quantities of war material and raises large local forces.

N.B.—His object was to consolidate an independent Sudan Empire for his family, in the event of their being deprived of Egypt; and the policy of arming the Sudan continued till 1882. Khartoum was the capital.

1842.—Mehemet Ali builds the Barrage, below Cairo.

1849.—Death of Mehemet Ali—a great man, born the same year as Napoleon and Wellington.

1869.—Opening of the Suez Canal. Sir Samuel Baker appointed Governor-General of the Sudan.

1874.—Colonel C. G. Gordon appointed Governor-General of the Sudan.

1875.—Ismail Pasha, Khedive, one of the most extravagant rulers ever known, gradually ruins the finances of Egypt. When unable to raise further loans, he sells his holding in the Suez Canal Company to England for £4,000,000 (now worth £20,000,000). Conquest of Darfur by Zobair.

1876.—Major Evelyn Baring (now Lord Cromer) is appointed a member of an international Commission of Inquiry into the Khedive's debts, and Egypt is found to be on the brink of financial ruin.

1879. — Gordon's Governor-Generalship of the Sudan terminates. The Khedive Ismail is deposed and replaced by his son, Tewfik Pasha—at the instigation of England.

1881.—The Mahdi declares himself at Abba Island, White Nile.

1881, *Aug.*—His followers massacre 200 Egyptian soldiers sent from Khartoum to arrest him.

1881, *Dec.* 9.—Mahdi defeats 1400 Egyptians near Fashoda and captures their arms.

1882.—The Mahdi's insurrection gradually spreads.

1882, *July* 11.—Bombardment of Alexandria by British fleet, owing to Arabi's revolt against the Khedive.

1882, *Sept.* 13.—Battle of Tel-el-Kebir, followed by occupation of Cairo by British under Wolseley, and restoration of Khedive.

1883, *Jan.* 17.—Mahdi takes the field in person and captures El Obeid after protracted siege.

1883, *Feb.*—Ten thousand of Arabi's soldiers are sent to the Sudan as reinforcements by the Egyptian Government.

1883, *March.*—Colonel Hicks, late of the Indian Army, arrives in Khartoum as Chief of the Staff.

1883, *Sept.*—Hicks advances into Kordofan with 9000 men and 20 guns, to attack the Mahdi.

1883, *Nov.* 5.—Hicks' force annihilated at Shekan, near El Obeid.

1883, *Dec.*—Slatin taken prisoner in Darfur.

N.B.—By end of 1883 the Mahdi had captured at least 20,000 rifles, 19 guns and quantities of ammunition.

1884, *Jan.* 16.—Gordon sent by Gladstone to evacuate the Sudan garrisons—Egyptian soldiers—namely, the remnant of the original 40,000 quartered in the Sudan.

1884, *Feb.* 4.—Colonel V. Baker, sent to relieve Tokar with 3500 Egyptians and six guns, is completely defeated at El Teb by Osman Digna.

1884, *Feb.* 18.—Gordon reaches Khartoum, telegraphs to British Government that he "cannot evacuate and will not abandon the garrison," and asks for the assistance of Zobair. This is refused on moral grounds, because Zobair Pasha was once a slaver!

1884, *Feb.* 29.—British force of 3000 defeats Osman Digna at El Teb.

1884, *March* 13.—Same force again defeats him at Tamaai, but is subsequently withdrawn to Suakin, which it holds.

1884, *March* 19.—Gordon at Khartoum cut off and invested.

1884, *May* 26.—Mahdi captures Berber, and the question is definitely put—Will England send a relief expedition or not? The Nile will rise in July. The British Government takes no action.

1884, *Aug.* 7.—Lord Hartington, Secretary of State for War, obtains a vote of credit, with a view to eventual relief of Gordon—"if necessary."

1884, *Sept.* 10.—First portion of Relief Expedition leaves England.

1884, *Oct.* 21.—Expedition leaves Wadi Halfa.

1885, *Jan.* 17.—Battle of Abu Klea—Mahdists break into British square, but are beaten off.

1885, *Jan.* 20.—Desert Column arrives at Gubat on the Nile, near Metemma, and is met by Gordon's four steamers next day.

1885, *Jan.* 24.—These steamers embark a small force for Khartoum.

1885, *Jan.* 26.—Khartoum falls and Gordon is killed.

1885, *Jan.* 28.—Steamers sight Khartoum—too late!

N.B.—By its capture the Dervishes become possessed of quantities of rifles and munitions of war.

1885, *Feb.* 14.—Retreat of Desert Column from Gubat to Dongola.

1885, *Feb.* 17.—Contract for construction of a railway from Suakin to Berber signed by British Government.

1885, *Feb.* 20.—Another Suakin Field Force organised—about fifteen thousand men, British and Indian—to protect this railway.

1885, *March* 13.—Railway construction commenced.

1885, *March* 22.—McNeill's zariba—Arabs break into it.

1885, *May* 17.—Suakin Field Force withdrawn and railway abandoned.

1885, *June*.—Death of the Mahdi, and succession of the Khalifa.

1885, *July* 5.—Dongola evacuated. Frontier handed over to Egyptian Army.

1885, *Dec.* 30.—Battle of Ginnis. (Stephenson).

1889, *Aug.* 3.—Battle of Toski, near Wadi Halfa—Dervish invasion of Egypt defeated by Grenfell (Sirdar).

1895, *Feb.* 20.—Slatin escapes from Omdurman.

1896, *March* 1. — Battle of Adowa — defeat of Italians by Abyssinians.

1896, *March* 20. — Dongola Expedition starts. (Kitchener, Sirdar).

1896, *Sept.* 23.—Dongola occupied.

1897, *Aug.* 7.—Battle of Abu Hamed. (Hunter.)

1898, *April* 8.—Battle of the Atbara. (Kitchener.)

1898, *Sept.* 2.—Battle of Omdurman. (Kitchener.)

1899, *Nov.* 24.—Battle of El Gedid and death of the Khalifa. (Wingate.)

1900, *Jan.* 1.—Railway completed from Wadi Halfa to Khartoum.

1902, *Nov.* 8.—Gordon's College at Khartoum opened by Kitchener.

1905.—Peace and plenty in the Sudan—*see* Lord Cromer's last Official Report.

CHAPTER VII

THE EGYPTIAN ARMY AT WORK

See map facing page 238

WHENEVER military errors are committed the general public is usually led to believe that the fault lies with the " stupid officer " on the spot. Yet there have been occasions in which the officer on the spot has saved the civilian in the Cabinet from the consequences of his ignorance, as the Egyptian Army was now to prove.

In March 1896, a Cabinet Council was summoned at short notice to deliberate upon an unexpected event. The Prime Minister addressing his colleagues in a room at the Foreign Office, announced that a grave situation had arisen in one of the new colonies of the Kingdom of Italy. There was, unfortunately, truth in the public telegrams describing an Italian defeat in Abyssinia. King Menelek's army had, undoubtedly, gained a decisive victory over a considerable Italian force at Adowa, capturing some hundreds of prisoners. The probable fate of these wretched Europeans was horrible to contemplate, and England would willingly extend to Italy a helping hand in the north-east corner of Africa, where this regrettable occurrence took place. At Cairo we had a small British garrison, but Cairo being a considerable distance from Adowa, it would be difficult for this garrison to render effective assistance. Under these circumstances, could any means be devised of helping Italy, without incurring undue risk ourselves ?

At this point several ministers shifted uneasily in their chairs, putting on their spectacles and removing them nervously. One of the younger members begged that a map might be brought to assist them in their deliberations, and a messenger departed to fetch it. He returned with an atlas printed in 1882, that being the latest edition available. After some difficulty Cairo was found on one page and Abyssinia on another, but the intervening regions were nowhere shown. However, on looking at the small general map of Africa, some one remarked that Cairo did not after all appear very far distant from Abyssinia, and those who had been uneasy were reassured!

Meanwhile, a Cabinet Minister who had lately travelled up the Nile to Wadi Halfa sent to his office for a bigger, modern map. On arrival it covered the table in the middle of the room, though it only represented the Nile valley from Cairo to Khartoum. At the mention of Khartoum there was an awkward pause and one or two murmurs of apprehension*—so the Prime Minister quickly pointed out that there was no intention of undertaking the reconquest of the Sudan, but that a demonstration on the northern frontier of the Khalifa's empire might cause that potentate to refrain from attacking our Italian friends' garrison at Kassala, which was at that moment threatened. This, though still somewhat alarming, sounded less dangerous, especially as the Prime Minister, who meant to have his way, proceeded to state that the Egyptian Army had a force at Wadi Halfa, and that it might be possible for this force to advance a little distance south.

The heads now bent over the map to discover where

* One member of the Cabinet had been Secretary of State for War in Mr. Gladstone's administration, during which all the military failures in the Sudan occurred.

the Egyptian Army had a post, and the Minister who had seen it explained to his colleagues how efficient the garrison was. Moreover, the name Wadi Halfa was printed in large, block letters which gave it a solid look. Southwards the names, Akasha, Firkeh, Kosheh, (in small type,) looked comparatively insignificant, and as if a small force could easily occupy one of them, so each was suggested in turn. But the Minister who had been up the Nile and knew what he was talking about put his finger on the big block letters—DONGOLA—and suggested that, if any advance at all were advisable, the occupation of Dongola might have some influence on the Khalifa, whereas to occupy a small mud village whose inhabitants the Dervishes had already exterminated could have no effect.

However the Cabinet dispersed without coming to any decision, beyond a request to the Commander-in-Chief to write a minute on the feasibility of an advance —not an expedition—to an unnamed spot south of Wadi Halfa. A few of England's councillors left the room with a vague recollection of some unfamiliar African names which had been referred to on the map, and one aged politician in particular was so bewildered that when, in the street, a reporter of his acquaintance hurriedly asked him what the meeting had been concerned with, he could remember nothing but the word "Dongola," which he murmured unconsciously.

That afternoon the Commander-in-Chief sat at his desk composing a minute which he knew would be futile, when suddenly his ear caught sound of the word "Dongola"—shouted by newsboys down in the street. By spending a halfpenny he learned that the subject of his minute had been settled without him, and that he might spare himself further effort that day.

In the evening to all parts of the British Empire the

various press-associations telegraphed the welcome report that the long-delayed Nile expedition was to start, and that Dongola would be its objective—nor was this the first time a hesitating administration has had its hand forced by a smart reporter possessing the gift of intelligent anticipation.*

The news was everywhere received with approbation, and the Cabinet had to decide whether it should be categorically denied or confirmed. Much depended upon the views held by Lord Cromer, the strong man directing the destiny of Egypt and by the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener, neither of whom were expecting any call to arms. Had they flinched, as lesser men might have done, from undertaking a campaign at the season of lowest Nile and with no opportunity of preparing for desert warfare on a large scale, it is probable that the reconquest of the Sudan would have been indefinitely postponed. Had either of them begged for a short space of time—that valuable factor which British Cabinets never accord to British generals before either plunging or drifting into war—the opportunity might have been lost. They, therefore, telegraphed to London that the Egyptian army could move southwards at once and the premature newspaper reports were accordingly confirmed. By March 20—that is within three weeks of the Italian defeat at Adowa, and within a week of any advance being thought of—Major John Collinson had covered eighty-five miles to Akasha, in command of the 13th Sudanese battalion, with two squadrons of cavalry, one company of camelry, one battery of artillery and a couple of machine guns. Thus the gauntlet was boldly flung down on the desert

* Note the contrast between this and the arrangements made by Bismarck and Moltke for the invasions of Schleswig-Holstein 1864, Austria 1866, France 1870; and by the Japanese in Manchuria 1904.

sand within a single day's march of 3000 Dervishes at Firkeh, and the reconquest of the Sudan had commenced. So ready was the Egyptian Army for active service that the troops at Wadi Halfa started at dawn on the day following their first orders to move.

The advance guard thus thrust forward confined itself to fortifying a defensive position, patrolling in all directions and protecting convoys from the base, whilst the master-mind of the Sirdar bent itself to the task of rapidly building up at Akasha an army and its stores, destined to recapture the Dongola Province and hold it against any probable attack.

During this necessary pause for preparation, let us glance at the problem confronting the General and the methods he adopted to solve it.

The expression Nile valley is conveniently used to denote the wide belt of country crossed by the river on its long journey from the Victoria Nyanza to the Mediterranean Sea, but is by no means descriptive of the scene, because no valley is visible to the eye, nor does the landscape bear the remotest resemblance to valleys such as those of the Rhine or the Thames. The scenery has a beauty and colouring of its own which cannot be likened or compared with that of other lands. In the mid-day sun the chiselled lines of rocky hill strike hard and clear against a steel-blue sky without a cloud. At sunset all is softened by the vivid colours in the west, and a weird calm broods over the landscape. The Nile itself, when not in flood, resembles a giant canal humbly flowing at the bottom of a vast ditch, flanked by perpendicular banks of sun-baked mud: the top of these banks is level with the surrounding country, yet the masts of vessels sailing over the water are unseen, and the maxim at the mast-head of a gunboat cannot be aimed at distant objects. But at full-flood the

canal has grown into a tumultuous tide of surging water, brim-full to the bank's top and almost even with the desert. The gunboat, seen from a distance, now towers above the land and looks as if it were steaming across country. The canal-like appearance of the river is further heightened by the action of the so-called "cataracts," which are really miles and miles of rocky boulders and islands, obstructing the waterway and holding up the water-level—like rough-hewn locks devised by mighty Titans. Without them, the Nile would have such a rapid fall that it would either run dry or degenerate into a string of pools during half the year ; and on the flood would become an unmanageable torrent. For this peculiar river, which is wider and deeper at Khartoum than at Cairo and flows unfed by rain or tributary stream during the last 1500 miles of its course, rises twenty-six feet in a couple of months, and submerges the cataracts deep below its surface—so great is the rainfall at its distant sources. From Abyssinian mountains 2000 miles from Cairo, and from equatorial lakes and marshes 3000 miles to the south, the abundant waters travel down the canal through parched lands and deserts, everywhere producing in August, September and October the annual marvel of the flood, which men have watched and worshipped since the dawn of their earliest history. To ignore this prodigy of nature when engaged on a campaign or in the pursuit of agriculture, is as fatal as to neglect the seasons of the solar year in other lands. It spells disaster. Yet it was through neglect of this obvious factor that the first Sudan expeditions organised in London ended in failure whereas those directed from Cairo succeeded, and that the failures cost England many millions of pounds, whereas the successes cost her only £800,000 spent on

railways. The truth is that for the invasion of the Sudan a knowledge of how and when to work boats up dangerous cataracts is of infinitely greater value than the information supplied in military text-books.

Right methods were, therefore, only employed after the Consul-General at Cairo had rescued the government of Egypt from the hands of politicians in England, and when the direction of the forces engaged in Sudan operations was placed in the hands of officers who studied their job on the spot and discarded without fear military notions which experience proved to be fads. It is no exaggeration to assert that any of the Sirdar's battalions could at any time have marched out from its quarters on the frontier to engage in a battle like Abu Klea or one of the numerous British engagements around Suakim. A Dervish Emir, if he sees a tempting opportunity, will almost invariably launch an attack, and the art of fighting him consists in giving him no such opening until it suits the invading force to be attacked with a chance of victory, yielding results worth fighting for. To blunder forward in ignorance of the whereabouts of the enemy and be " unexpectedly attacked " in the scrub is not a manœuvre calculated to defeat Dervishes. Such battles may be won by the valour and discipline of junior officers and their men, but do not display much acquaintance with the business of war. They are usually followed by necessary retreats to obtain water and supplies, and have to be constantly repeated until one side or the other is worn out. Now, Sir Herbert Kitchener's conception of Sudan warfare was of a different type. In the first place he armed himself during peace with an intelligence department, under Major Wingate, which devoted its whole energies year in and year out to collecting and studying every scrap of news regarding what occurred at Omdurman

and the provinces of the Khalifa's dominion. Through this agency, which was materially strengthened by the escape of Slatin Pasha from Omdurman, the general was well posted with accurate information about his enemy.

His quick advance to Akasha was, therefore, not a blind move in a southerly direction in obedience to orders from London, but a deliberate plan for getting into touch with a substantial Dervish force at Firkeh and reconnoitring it at leisure, whilst the Egyptian army mobilised in rear and became gradually perfected in the thousand and one details which just make the difference between brigades trained by their own officers and a haphazard assemblage of armed units. If only the Dervishes at Firkeh could be kept in play for a few months, even at the risk of their being meanwhile reinforced, it would be possible to utilise the whole army in the forward move to Dongola—backed by a railway to be constructed round 200 miles of consecutive cataracts, and strengthened at high Nile by gunboats which would then be able to ascend the river. For it must be borne in mind that above Wadi Halfa the river's course is obstructed by rocks and boulders of the most forbidding granite, which extend all the way to the navigable water of the Dongola province. They constitute the most formidable series of cataracts encountered along the whole course of the Nile, and are bordered by vast uninhabited deserts of sand and rocky hills—locally termed the "belly of rocks." Akasha, a small deserted village situated on the river's bank in the midst of this barren land, became on the arrival of the advanced guard, the point of concentration of the scattered corps of the Egyptian army. From Suakin, Cairo, Assouan and Wadi Halfa, squadrons, batteries and battalions trickled into

Akasha, and for three months the little place loomed large in the eyes of all who take an interest in the affairs of our Empire. After the first week the advanced guard was increased to a brigade of all arms commanded by a Major; it subsequently grew into a division of three brigades commanded by a Colonel under forty years of age. To supply such a force in this wilderness and southwards was the problem of the hour, a problem, too, which must be solved on economical lines. No one understood better than the thoughtful soldier who conducted operations that the future prosecution of the campaign depended on its being both cheaply managed and successfully fought. He could afford neither to waste money nor hazard a military reverse, nor even to indulge in a regrettable incident. Thirteen years of experience had taught him that most of our failures had been due to starting too late, and being consequently in too great a hurry.

For immediate necessities 5000 camels were purchased to work convoys between railhead at Sarras and Akasha. But camels are an expensive and perishable form of transport, requiring constant consideration in the matter of food and rest. The Sirdar, therefore, decided to reconstruct the old torn-up railway, started but never completed by Ishmail Pasha in the days of Egypt's unchecked extravagance. Railway work was begun forthwith, and a long chapter might pleasantly be devoted to the romance of building the Sudan Military Railway, were it not that our brief *résumé* can only spare it a few sentences. The Sirdar's idea was to build it on military lines with labour controlled by young bimbashis from the Royal Engineers and, as the campaign progressed, it developed into a great achievement. Long before any of the experts at home had grasped the necessities of the situation, Sir Herbert

Kitchener had made his plans, worked out their cost and begun to order his material. When it was discovered that the section between Wadi Halfa and Dongola Province involved nearly 200 miles of line, the War Office offered to send out a full Colonel and the usual staff for such an undertaking. But the Sirdar pointed out that a subaltern on the spot, Bimbashi Girouard, fully satisfied his requirements and that this young officer preferred to build the line without the "usual" staff. In the sequel Girouard and a dozen brother subalterns constructed and operated 780 miles of railway under difficult and entirely novel conditions, and may fairly claim to have conquered the Sudan on an iron horse.

By the first week in June the situation was as follows, and all was ready for the first battle of the campaign. Suakim, Tokar and their neighbourhood were safely held by a brigade of the Indian army. Egypt was protected by a brigade of British troops. Wadi Halfa was garrisoned by a battalion of British infantry. The new railway was completed to within one day's camel-march of Akasha, where 9000 men were concentrated with ample supplies within striking distance of the enemy.

Meanwhile the Dervishes at Firkeh had not been idle, nor was the Khalifa at Omdurman unaware of the impending attack. But they knew not what to think of our prolonged delay, and finally put it down to hesitation and fear. Fifty notable Emirs commanded the various detachments at Firkeh whom they disposed in a fortified position of some strength—intending to issue forth and attack at the first favourable opportunity. Almost daily they reconnoitred the outpost line which surrounded Akasha and frequently had brushes with Egyptian patrols. They had plenty of

spies in and about the Egyptian camp in the shape of camel-drivers and villagers on adjacent Nile islands. But as week after week passed without any aggressive action the Dervishes were lulled into a false sense of security. The Egyptian cavalry, admirably led by Bimbashi Broadwood, meanwhile reconnoitred the enemy's stronghold without ever offering themselves as a target for overwhelming attack. So the Emirs openly boasted in their camp that the "infidel Kafirs" were too terrified to hazard a fight with the chosen warriors of the Khalifa, whilst in truth the Sirdar was preparing his blow and acquiring exact knowledge upon which to base his action.

On June 6, 1896, keeping his intentions secret until the last moment, Kitchener suddenly issued detailed orders to all units to make a night march on Firkeh and assault it at dawn. A complete surprise was aimed at, but being a most difficult thing to achieve, any commander is lucky if he brings off a partial surprise only. In this instance fortune favoured the scheme—for at three in the afternoon, when the force was actually parading in camp for its night march, Osman Azrak, the chief Dervish Emir, lay in observation on a hill near our outposts. As he watched, clouds of dust—a common feature of the country—obscured the view, and after waiting a little he retired with his horsemen and reported at Firkeh that the Turks lay quiet as usual!

For the night march the Sirdar distributed the troops in two columns which were to move by different routes and attack simultaneously, if possible. The small column, some 2000 strong, all mounted on camels or horses, included a battery of horse artillery, seven squadrons of cavalry, eight companies of camel-corps and a battalion of Sudanese infantry riding transport camels for the occasion. This column,

commanded by Major Burn-Murdoch, moved from Akasha just before sunset and took a desert road leading round the enemy's position. Its orders were to occupy certain hills behind the Dervish flank by 4.30 A.M., and then to wait and co-operate with the main attack. The larger column under the personal command of the Sirdar was composed of two field batteries, one maxim battery and a division of infantry, the latter under Colonel Hunter, whose Brigadiers were Majors Maxwell, MacDonald and Lewis. It marched off about 4 P.M. along the river track which leads direct to Firkeh village, fourteen miles—a narrow and difficult path for an army to follow in the dark. The moon rose late, and the nine infantry battalions tramped silently through the darkness, strung out along a narrow track, at one time stumbling over rocks and boulders, at others ankle-deep in soft sand. Not a sound was audible save the crunch of boots and the occasional rattle of a rifle against the accoutrements, as the men pressed eagerly onwards. To their right the swish of the river, forcing its way through rockstrewn cataracts, muffled all noises into one monotonous murmur. To their left high hills of granite throwing out spurs to the river's edge caused delays to the column as it passed them in single file. The darkness was intense, but by midnight the force was concentrated and lay down to rest on a level and sandy plain—within four miles of its objective. At 2.30 it moved on by moonlight and trickled man by man through a gorge, while in front the way seemed barred by a mountain mass rising 900 feet above the river and leaving the narrowest of defiles from which the battalions must debouch within shot of the enemy's advanced post. Suddenly in the stillness of the night drums were heard beating a mile to the front. The

Dervishes must be on the alert! Would they charge the head of the column in the defile? But the sound died down. It had been but the usual call to morning prayer in the Dervish *dem*. Had not Osman Azrak with his own eyes seen the infidels quiet in their camp, just as they had been any day these two months past?

Onwards pressed the column till dawn. Then rapidly the leading battalion, 10th Sudanese, deployed into line across the defile—the keen active blacks grinning with pleasure at the prospect of a fight, every man intently watching for the first sign of the hated Baggara, yet drilled to listen and wait for the orders of his officers. This fine battalion, which had recently been engaged in a brush with Osman Digna at Suakin, was from commanding officer to recruit a remarkable blend of civilised discipline and primitive manhood, a living example of the virtues of England grafted to the valour of Equatoria. It pushed on in line over ground broken by scrub, high grass and stunted trees; paused for the remainder of Lewis's brigade to deploy on either side, and to give time to MacDonald's brigade, still hemmed between mountain and river, to prolong the line to the left. Daylight now appeared; the moment for swift action was at hand; yet no further sound or sign revealed the enemy's presence. Quick orders from the Sirdar at the front hurried MacDonald round the base of the mountain, which trended away from the river and gave place to a dry kor in which to deploy out of sight—with open ground in front. Maxwell's brigade too was hustled through the defile as minutes were precious. Suddenly a single shot rang out high up on the mountain side. It was the Dervish outpost's first alarm. Other shots quickly followed as the outpost fell back. The rocky ridge in front opened fire. The 10th replied with crashes of volley firing. Away

in the distance beyond the Dervishes the Sirdar heard the report of his horse artillery in action, and knew that his two columns would combine. It was 5.30 A.M. The simultaneous attack had begun. The surprise of the enemy was complete.

With the opening of a battle, a commander's task is temporarily ended. The art of generalship is to dispose troops within touch of their enemy in such tactically superior positions and at such a tactically favourable moment that—if their fighting qualities are superior to those of the opponent—the victory shall be decisive and far-reaching. The attack once launched must be left to the initiative of subordinate officers and the valour of the men. In this instance the brigadiers were men of forty, the commanders of battalions men of about thirty-three and the bimbashis still younger. Their battle-leading, dictated by common sense and experience, gave the Dervishes not one chance in a hundred. Nevertheless the enemy, stubborn and defiant in spite of his flank being turned before the action began, fought with the old courage of his race—neither giving nor expecting quarter.

When MacDonald had deployed, he and Lewis pushed home their attacks—the former against the Dervish right the latter against their left, posted at the village of Firkeh on the river bank. Maxwell—held in reserve—soon pressed forward to cover the gap between these two brigades. A field battery and the maxims found good positions on a slope of Firkeh mountain, whence they fired over the heads of the attacking infantry. The desert column had strict orders to keep out of the line of fire of our main attack and therefore confined its action to long-range shooting of a useful character.

The scheme of the night march and deployment at

daylight had been so carefully planned and carried out that the actual fighting was short, sharp and decisive. The scene of action, in which men contended like tiny ants in a wilderness of lonely desert, resembled a toy arena, as the men in khaki advanced and the white-robed Dervishes hurried from village and camp to man their walls and trenches. The fortified position—a mile and a half long—extended across level ground by the Nile to a rocky ridge in the desert. From loop-holed walls, houses and breastworks, a spluttering fire of Remington rifles was directed on the Egyptian and Sudanese battalions as they advanced to the assault.

While Lewis's brigade swung to the right to attack the village and engage in close fighting with its defenders, MacDonald and his Sudanese were charged by a gallant band of Baggara horse, who all perished in their attempt. Wheeling his left well forward so as to envelop the Dervish flank MacDonald assaulted the ridge with great dash, shooting and bayoneting its brave defenders and driving them out of their breast-works to another ridge in rear. Pressing impetuously forward the Sudanese drove the enemy down one hill and up another, always swinging their left forward, until at the end of the action the brigade faced the river and hemmed the flying enemy against its shore. Some escaped by swimming, others sought cover below the bank; all in the open were routed or killed. Mean-while Lewis carried the village, Maxwell occupied the enemy's *dem* or camp, and the Desert Column took up the pursuit with cavalry, horse artillery and camel-corps, a pursuit which was continued to Fereig, sixty-five miles distant, during the following days. By 7.30 A.M. the general action was over, though a number of Arabs still maintained a desperate resistance in the houses and courtyards. So the long straggling village had to be

cleared by the three brigades—some 100 corpses being afterwards counted in one group of buildings. The enemy's casualties numbered 780 dead, 500 wounded, and 600 prisoners. The Sirdar's list amounted to one British officer wounded and 103 of other ranks killed and wounded. Such was indeed a small price to pay for a decisive and complete victory, and on this account some critics have concluded that the action was unimportant. But surely the value of a victory should be measured, not by the length of the casualty list, but by the ultimate effect of defeat on the conquered and the advantages reaped by the victors.

At Firkeh the Dervish "Empire" sustained a blow which paralysed its military enterprise for a year, whilst the Egyptian army gathered self-confidence and prestige. Had the victory been less decisive or had the Dervishes been able to claim a minor success, there is no doubt that further desperate fighting would have been necessary before peace could have been restored to the Dongola province, and few who recollect the circumstances of the moment can affirm that Sir Herbert Kitchener would have been the man entrusted with the supreme command of the forces subsequently sent to reconquer the Sudan. Through his victory at Firkeh, he gained the approval of the Home Government; the Egyptian army showed it could win British battles without aid from British troops and the operations continued to be directed by the youthful general and his officers, instead of by older men and inexperienced troops from home stations. Moreover the British public became keenly interested in the further prosecution of the war and none heeded the various croakers who in England always side with England's enemies and foretell disaster to every British enterprise.

After burying the dead and enlisting the prisoners into the Sudanese battalions, the Sirdar distributed the force in several camps south of Firkeh and busied himself with preparations for the forward move, which would place him upon an open reach of the river and in military occupation of the province of Dongola. It was an anxious period of hard work in the hottest months of the year and in the hottest part of the Sudan. Moreover the good fortune which had hitherto attended the undertaking seemed to desert it and everything went contrary. Before operations could be resumed railway construction must be completed to the advanced base at Kosheh: gunboats and sailing-boats had to be passed up the cataracts on the rising Nile: and food and stores accumulated at the front. The labour for these undertakings and the directing control must be provided by the army and its officers. Unfortunately the Nile rose late and delayed the work: instead of the usual north winds, which enable sailing-boats to ascend the rapids, it blew for forty consecutive days from the south: the desert which for half a century had known no rain was deluged by violent cyclonic storms and several miles of railway embankment were washed completely away, leaving the rails hanging in festoons amidst the wreckage: worst of all an epidemic of cholera broke out in Egypt, ascended the Nile and attacked the army in a virulent form. Each of these misfortunes was exceptional and peculiar to 1896, yet all descended upon the troops during July and August and nearly wrecked the expedition. It required the Sirdar's highest powers of rapid organisation and decision to deal with each occurrence in turn, and he displayed his quality in a marked degree—as will never be forgotten by those who saw him at work.

The epidemic killed off 919 out of 1218 attacked, and

the usual horrors of a cholera camp were present day and night. The bimbashis and their men struggled with gunboats and sailing-boats in the river, at railway construction and repairs in the desert, and with the nightmare of a deadly disease. If the Dervishes had not been so thoroughly beaten, what an opportunity for counter-attacks!

However, by dint of perseverance on the part of the army and a cool head on the shoulders of its commander, difficulties were overcome as they arose. Four gunboats and three steamers were hauled by manual labour up the worst cataracts; a refreshing wind from the north at last enabled the flotilla of sailing-boats to stem the swift current of the Nile; the railway was repaired by supreme efforts in seven days, and was then completed to Kosheh, where stores for some months were collected. The British battalion at Wadi Halfa was moved to the front; a fourth brigade (Fellaheen) under Major David was added to Colonel Hunter's division; on September 12 all was ready for the march on Dongola, and the trials of officers and men were forgotten in the exhilaration of the advance.

Meanwhile the Dervishes under Wad Bishara—a young Emir and a fine specimen of the Arab fighting chief—had been reinforced from Omdurman and numbered nearly 8000 regulars, besides a contingent of local tribesmen of little or no military value. That this Emir and his men meant fighting there can be no doubt, for Wad Bishara had shown his mettle in many an action in Darfur where he held supreme command until replaced by the Khalifa's cousin, Mahmud. But the defeat at Firkeh had somewhat diminished that absolute certainty of victory, without which Moslem soldiers are not seen at their best. In civilised forces, such as the Egyptian and Indian armies, discipline, *esprit de corps*

and mutual confidence make fanaticism unnecessary; but, in armies where discipline depends on personal influence, fanaticism of one sort or another is essential to success. The Dervishes have always been brave fighters, prepared to die in battle for their cause and ready to sell their lives dearly when cornered, but long years of easy victories over inferior enemies followed by the unrestrained pillage of the conquered had deadened the spiritual power of their early fanaticism. In the days of the Mahdi it was glorious to die in battle for the sake of religion and to free the land from alien tyrants. It was a different thing to fight as a mercenary in the army of a despotic Khalifa. Yet so great is the warlike instinct of the tribes of the Sudan, that, if only the Dervishes could score a single success against the Egyptians, Wad Bishara and the Sirdar both knew that they would at once become a formidable military force. The tactics of these two commanders were therefore simple and straightforward. The Sirdar meant to give his enemy no opportunity of winning even a minor action: Wad Bishara, after stemming the flight from Firkeh, was determined not to suffer a second defeat, but hoped to fall upon some detachment of Egyptians and quicken the spirit of his men by a taste of victory. He accordingly moved northwards from Dongola with his whole force, crossed the Nile and occupied a position at Kerma, a hundred miles south of Kosheh on the same side of the river. From thence he sent out strong patrols, which cut the telegraph wire behind Kitchener's leading brigade and fought our cavalry without decisive results. Meanwhile, instead of using their superior mobility, the Dervishes sat passively in this position, whilst the invading army concentrated within seven miles of them, ready for another destructive swoop like that of

Firkeh: but Wad Bishara, more alert and better informed than Osman Azrak, had an alternative plan, and, as soon as he realised that he could neither stop the main advance nor overwhelm a detachment, he suddenly withdrew across the river and placed its flooded waters between himself and destruction. Meanwhile the Sirdar's force was ordered to deploy at sunrise and assault Kerma. At that hour it accordingly advanced majestically to the attack, but the carefully planned manœuvre proved abortive, because the Dervishes had abandoned their intrenchments that night. A mile beyond, at Hafir on the further bank, a small steamer—sad relic of Gordon's ingenuity—and a fleet of boats indicated what had happened, so the Egyptian advance was continued till the two forces faced one another, with only the Nile between them. At 6.30 A.M. the infantry, disappointed of its prey, sat down to watch as spectators a naval action between our three gunboats—the fourth had been sunk on a rock in the cataracts—and a fortified village. The Dervish position occupied three-quarters of a mile of the bank and was cunningly devised to shelter its defenders and afford them a good field of fire towards the river. Entrenchments, thick mud walls, houses and pits covered the bank. Five brass guns in gun-pits were mounted close to the water's edge; a number of riflemen had climbed the tall palm-trees which waved overhead and, concealed by the foliage, commanded the decks of boats. At intervals the coloured flags of the principal Emirs, blazoned with texts from the Koran, bid defiance to the invaders, and, in the desert beyond, the broad-bladed spears of the Baggara horse flashed in the sun as the riders brandished their arms.

Directly the gunboats were ready for action, the

horse battery opened fire, and was answered by a splutter of musketry along the whole line of intrenchments, indicating that they were thickly occupied from end to end. Then, one by one the three gunboats struggled against the current to within range of the Dervishes and became targets for a formidable fire, which splashed like hail all over them and cut the water around them into foam. From the palm-tops the fire was especially galling, as it searched the decks and enfiladed the slight shields of both maxims and guns. One Dervish shell penetrated the *Abu Klea* at the water-line and entered the magazine, but did not explode. Several shells struck the *Metemma*. Commander Colville, R.N., on the *Tamai*, was severely wounded in the wrist, and casualties occurred on all the boats. Their practice on the entrenchments sent clouds of dust into the air and did some execution, but without subduing the enemy's fire. The bold riflemen in the tree-tops were frequently dropped like young rooks on a spring day, but the Dervish fire scarcely slackened, and the gunboats had to turn tail amidst the jeers of the Arabs and run down-stream to make good their injuries. Again they moved up-stream and renewed the attack with no better success. At the end of three hours' engagement hardly any progress had been made, and it was obvious to the Sirdar that other tactics must be adopted. He accordingly directed the gunboats once more to run the gauntlet, but to proceed at full steam in line abreast without attempting to reply to the Dervishes, and to run on thirty-five miles to the town of Dongola and attack the enemy's base and line of communications.

This movement was prepared and supported by long range infantry volleys across the river and by the fire of all the batteries at 1300 yards. It proved more

effective, though it did not completely subdue the Dervishes. The palm-tree riflemen were dislodged, the five brass guns were silenced, the Arab steamer sunk, and, under cover of these results, the gunboats steamed past the entrenchments. At eleven o'clock the action subsided into desultory firing which lasted throughout the hot day—a reminder to the opposing armies that neither side could yet claim a victory. The Egyptian losses were insignificant. Wad Bishara had 200 dead and many wounded. He himself was hurt by a splinter and was nervous about his line of retreat since the gunboats had gone south. During the night he attempted to revictual his force from the stores of grain which lay in his boats by the bank, but the moon in the Sudan is bright—brighter than elsewhere—and the watchful Egyptian gunners drove away all who tried to carry provisions to the shore. Wad Bishara was therefore obliged to evacuate Hafir, abandon his boats and beat a hasty retreat on Dongola. By daylight the place was forsaken, and the villagers were easily persuaded to bring over the boats to the Sirdar.

He at once commenced crossing the river with his whole force, and it is evidence of the efficient methods of the Egyptian army that by means of only two small steamers and fifty captured boats 14,000 men, 24 guns, 3000 horses, mules and camels, and five days' supplies for all concerned were ferried across a wide and rapid river in thirty hours, with only one casualty—a lamed horse. Yet there were no special landing facilities on either bank, and the animals had to be lifted by men into boats, their legs tied together to prevent kicking. It is by similar feats over material obstacles that an organising brain gains victories for its side—victories which perhaps only the student of military history recognises and admires.

The remainder of this year's campaign (1896) can be related in a few words. Having got the Dervishes fairly on the run and obtained naval command of a clear waterway at either high or low Nile, the Sirdar pressed his advantage without hesitation. Even before the troops had all crossed, the leading brigades were heading for Dongola which the gunboats had busily bombarded.

Would Bishara stand and fight ? was the question every man was asking : and it is certain that the Emir himself was as anxious as any one in either force to hazard a battle. Indeed he constantly harassed the Egyptian outposts six miles from Dongola during their halt. But Wad Bishara was dealing with occurrences beyond his control and with an enemy who gave him few openings. For on the following morning at 4.30 the Sirdar was again moving to the attack and, after the sun rose and lighted up the level sands of the desert, the two armies were again facing one another. The Egyptian force extended for two miles across the plain, a thin line of marching men, strengthened at intervals by supports, followed by transport camels and a reserve, with one flank on the river and the other in the desert protected by mounted troops. The Dervishes, less numerous but more imposing, stood in groups outside the town hesitating whether to charge home or take to flight. But a nearer view of the approaching battalions, moving slowly and steadily in disciplined ranks, quickened their decision, and the Dervish force retreated southwards without firing a shot. There was to be no more fighting in the Dongola province, for the riflemen retired round the bends of the river three hundred and fifty miles to Abu Hamed, whilst the horsemen made across the desert to Metemma and Omdurman. The Egyptian army was everywhere

received with enthusiasm by the remnant of the local population, and agricultural prosperity was restored very soon after the occupation.

In England a military success in the Sudan, after so many years of disappointment and failure, was hailed with delight. Colonel Sir Herbert Kitchener was promoted a major-general, as were also Colonels Hunter and Rundle, a generous list of promotions and decorations bestowed fitting rewards on the junior officers who had created a fighting force out of unpromising material, and the thoughts of the British nation turned wistfully to Khartoum and the half-forgotten tale of the abandonment of Gordon.

The news carried to Omdurman by Wad Bishara and Osman Azrak created an alarm which can only be explained on the hypothesis that these Emirs exaggerated the power of the Egyptian army in order to make out a case for their loss of a province. They reported that they had been closely pursued across the desert and that the invaders would shortly appear before the gates of the capital. The story caused a panic in the city whose 300,000 inhabitants had believed the Khalifa to be the supreme ruler of the world, and business came to a standstill. Hitherto the various Dervish armies had been everywhere successful, save in their failure to invade Egypt—a failure unknown to the mass of the people. They had repeatedly massacred thousands of Egyptian soldiers under the Mahdi: had conquered Kordofan, Darfur and the country beyond Fashoda: had three times compelled British forces to evacuate the Sudan: and had defeated the armies of Abyssinia led in person by King John, whose head was exposed in Omdurman as a trophy of victory. Now that the Abyssinians had defeated the Italians, the Khalifa was arranging an expedition to turn the

latter out of Kassala. Thus the capital was wholly unprepared for anything in the nature of a reverse, and its population was not of a character to bear a shock with equanimity, for the inhabitants of this peculiar town were in no way indigenous to its soil, but had been collected from various districts for the glorification of the Baggara and as hostages for the behaviour of distant provinces. Whenever the Khalifa suspected the loyalty of a tribe—and each was in turn suspected—his system was to round up a number of its chief families and drive them to the capital with their portable property, to dwell under his eye in a suburb built by themselves and their slaves. None could leave Omdurman without his permission, under penalty of death.

In this manner the city grew from the hamlet in which the Mahdi first pitched his camp into a huge agglomeration of solid houses, covering an immense area, each quarter subdivided into sections, tribe by tribe—to facilitate control by the central authority. As the tribes from time immemorial had been at feud with one another, they were unlikely to combine for any common purpose, and by playing off one against the other and occasionally executing a leader, the despot maintained a rough kind of discipline with consummate ability. According to his lights the Khalifa was undoubtedly a ruler of men, who federated a mass of warring elements into a nation and governed it without a rival during difficult times. His methods, though effective, were deplorable, and his despotism proved sterile; but in future years we perhaps shall realise that, in spite of the evil he wrought, he unconsciously paved the way for the higher standard of government which England is now developing on the Nile.

With characteristic power and an intuitive understanding of the people he addressed, Abdullahi stood up in the pulpit of the open mosque square to arrest the panic and explain away the news from Dongola. He announced that his mighty armies would at once be recalled from distant provinces for the defence of the city, that the insolent invaders would be lured into the heart of the Sudan and wiped off the face of the earth. He had seen in a dream the yellow plains of Kerreri whitened by their bones. Had not the accursed white men once before reached Metemma, only to be driven back by the chosen warriors of Mohammed? Let no man doubt him. The intrigues of the discontented would be punished with death and the faithful would live for ever in God.

His words were received with a shout of triumph, and thus by the mere weight of his personality he overawed the timid, encouraged the fanatical and restored his own prestige. Moreover he hit upon a plan of campaign which was probably the best under the circumstances, though other bones than those of his enemy were destined to whiten the plains of Kerreri, near Omdurman.

Accordingly he recalled Mahmud and his 14,000 men from Darfur and sent them to Metemma; by degees he concentrated at the capital various forces from outlying districts until his army numbered nearly 80,000 men, mostly Sudanese blacks commanded by Baggara arabs; he strengthened Abu Hamed and Berber by small contingents, and ordered local levies to be added to their garrisons; he commanded Osman Digna and his Suakin adherents to concentrate at Adarama on the Atbara River. These plans and movements took several months to carry out and were meanwhile duly reported to the Sirdar by the agents

of his sleepless intelligence department. Our infantry garrisons and gunboats in the newly acquired Dongola province were kept alert by frequent rumours of impending attacks, and the cavalry and camel-corps ceaselessly patrolled the wells of the surrounding deserts. During this lull in the operations the railway was extended to Kerma which it reached in April 1897, and another line was boldly projected across 233 miles of desert from Wadi Halfa towards Abu Hamed, held by a Dervish garrison under Mohamed-el-Zain.

When the Sirdar, on his own responsibility, determined to construct this desert line, he made a decision on which the future success or failure of the campaign mainly depended, and the reader is invited to study the map facing page 238 in order that he may realise the nature of the problem and the reasons which induced Kitchener to adopt a plan which others openly condemned. Subsequent events have proved the soundness of his judgment, but, at the time, experts both at home and on the spot had no hesitation in denouncing the desert railway as the scheme of a lunatic. As an alternative, they suggested one of three lines of advance for the Egyptian army, each necessitating a railway and each designed to establish our force on a navigable reach of the Nile between Abu Hamed and Khartoum. Of these the most popular and expensive was the line from Suakim to Berber. That it would take many years to build in no way daunted its ardent advocates, who were doubtless thinking more of future dividends than of immediate military necessities. Next in importance were those who favoured the theory of linking up all the navigable reaches of the river by railways round the cataracts, and wanted a railway from Merawi to Abu Hamed.

The third alternative was a line from Korti to Metemma across the Bayuda desert. But Kitchener considered that the advocates of these and other lines miscalculated the essential difficulties of building railways within striking distance of an enemy and the time required for the work. No railway could be built until its proposed terminus was held by an Egyptian garrison and its whole length protected by adequate forces. Construction trains on a single line cannot carry the supplies of an army as well as masses of railway plant; and large forces cannot subsist in deserts on camel transport. In fact it was not possible to construct the railway without a large force or to advance a large force without a railway, and it was because the Sirdar understood this simple proposition that he selected a line which obviated both difficulties.

Between Wadi Halfa and Abu Hamed the Nile makes an enormous bend and struggles through two long series of cataracts. Sir Herbert Kitchener therefore decided on a line of advance which would cut across this bend, as the string cuts the arc of a bow, and would also permit of the main portion of his railway being completed at a safe distance from the enemy's raiding parties. No defending force would be required to guard the line; Abu Hamed, the terminus, was within striking distance of the Egyptian army at Merawi and withal too distant from the main Dervish posts to be quickly reinforced. The opponents of this scheme declared that only a madman could propose to supply water by train to 2000 plate-layers in mid-desert, and that the further the railway advanced, the more impossible would the task become. But the problem depended on just the kind of calculation in which Kitchener excelled. He worked out the figures to his own satisfaction, and, in spite of remonstrance, started

construction at Wadi Halfa in January 1897, so as to be ready to move at the rise of the Nile. It was a daring resolve, daringly carried out and amply justified by results.

Whilst construction was in progress and the Nile stood at its lowest, a pause occurred in the prosecution of the campaign, and both sides had ample time to prepare for the eventual struggle. Meanwhile the tribes and numerous tribelets which unfortunately dwelt between the opposing armies suffered every hardship which Dervish malignity could inflict, and the Jaalin Arabs—who boast a descent direct from the Prophet Mohamed—were massacred, man, woman and child, to the number of 3000, merely because they favoured the invaders. This butchery occurred at Metemma in July and was the work of Mahmud's army, by direct order of the tyrant of Omdurman. Similar methods, on a smaller scale, were practised by Mohamed-el-Zain, the Baggara chief of Abu Hamed, against the dwellers in the cataracts between himself and our Merawi garrison, and his horsemen on one occasion cut off the rear-guard of an Egyptian patrol, wounding the British bimbashi and killing fourteen of his men.

But Mohamed-el-Zain's day of reckoning was at hand—for the railway at last reached to within 100 miles of his post, the Nile was rising in the cataracts and the moment for a blow was approaching. The task of capturing Abu Hamed was entrusted to Major-General Hunter and a brigade of all arms, consisting of twenty-five picked cavalry scouts, a battery of small guns, four battalions of infantry and 1314 transport camels—in all 2500 combatants with eighteen days' supplies. The little force was inspected by the Sirdar on July 28, on the bank of the Nile opposite

Merawi and began its forced march the following day, under the greatest secrecy.*

The problem confronting Hunter was to defeat Mohamed-el-Zain before he could be reinforced, and to hold Abu Hamed against future attacks. The distance to be covered was 145 miles through difficult and unknown country, and rapidity of movement was essential to success. The risk to his detached force lay in the possibility that the 700 Dervishes at Abu Hamed might be reinforced by others from Berber (1200 men) or Metemma (10,000 men) of whom the latter, by merely floating down the Nile in boats, could reach Abu Hamed ten days after Hunter's departure from Merawi. Moreover Hunter's column once launched could not be reinforced, owing to the difficulty of camel transport by land and the impossibility of hauling gunboats up cataracts in the face of an enemy. To mislead the Dervishes a strong patrol was despatched to Abu Klea wells whence rumours were spread that an advance on Metemma was imminent. But a Dervish spy had, of course, seen Hunter's column start, and a swift camel soon carried the news to the Baggara chiefs.

There was thus an element of romance and uncertainty in the enterprise undertaken by the flying column, and as all ranks in Dongola were acquainted with the situation and knew that the force was cut off from assistance, news of its progress was awaited with interest. The men composing it had implicit faith in the ability of their general whose rapid promotion had been earned in their midst, and bore with cheerful fortitude long and trying nights of marching and days of broken sleep under a pitiless sun. For eight and a half consecutive days the force averaged seventeen miles across desolate rock-strewn

* See map facing page 238.

country, by tracks which cut short the bends of the Nile in its struggle through the Monasir cataracts. As the route had not been reconnoitred this work was undertaken by a bimbashi who rode forward with the cavalry scouts to select halting-places by the river's edge. After leaving the fertile fields of Dongola one is struck by the absolute nakedness of the Monasir hills. The land possesses not even a thin streak of vegetation and, looked at from a height, has the appearance of a stormy ocean suddenly petrified into solid, red trap-rock and left to bake for centuries in the sun—a wilderness of volcanic hillocks, rising in rugged ridges hundreds of feet above the river. The inhabitants are few, and those few have a bearing as sullen as the aspect of their home, to which no man travels except his business be war. The Nile alone has a smiling surface as it dances along its numerous channels amidst water-worn boulders.

To march a column impeded by laden camels night after night through such a country required endurance, discipline and enthusiasm on the part of all concerned, yet so well did the troops respond to the test that their rate of marching brought them before Abu Hamed a day ahead of the programme.

By the morning of August 6, Ginnifab, eighteen miles from Abu Hamed, was occupied without opposition, but news had reached Hunter that Dervish reinforcements from both Berber and Metemma were on the move and might possibly reach Abu Hamed that night. Moreover it was discovered that a Monasir Arab had accompanied our column from Merawi and had frequently sent villagers of his tribe to warn Mohamed-el-Zain of our approach. Hunter accordingly decided to push forward that night to some point within striking distance of the town and make a fortified zariba for

his impedimenta. Starting before sundown, the force marched throughout the night, and at 4 A.M. halted by the river a mile and a half from Abu Hamed, whose look-out tower was just visible against the starlit sky. As soon as the weary transport came up a strong parapet was constructed of sacks of forage, biscuits, camel-saddles and baggage, and manned by half a battalion of infantry, two machine guns and all the servants, camel-men and followers—under a bimbashi.

Within this little fort the mass of camels were made to sit down, closely packed, with their forelegs lashed to prevent a stampede when firing commenced. Having thus secured his supplies and got rid of his baggage, Hunter paraded in light order and marched out to fight with 2200 men.

Much valuable time had been consumed by the construction of the defensive post, and it was daylight by the time we reached the plateau near Abu Hamed. Two Dervishes perched on the watch-tower calmly surveyed our proceedings. No other inhabitant was visible, and the town itself lay tucked along the river's bank so close to the steep slope of the over-hanging plateau that nothing could be seen of it. A couple of circular forts were found empty by the cavalry scouts—who, accompanied by three staff officers, rode well in advance of the infantry. As they neared the watch-tower the two Dervishes sullenly climbed down and disappeared with calm deliberation from the plateau, whose crest lay just beyond. Their place was taken by an eager bimbashi, who climbed to the top and obtained a clear view of the town which was so soon to be assaulted. It straggled for nearly a mile along the Nile, and was silent and apparently deserted as he gazed upon its walls and flat roofs. Across the wide river lay the green, fertile island of Mograt, whose

inhabitants were commencing their morning work—as though no disturbing element could interrupt their labours. Overhead coveys of sand-grouse chirped in alarm, but the Dervishes lay low, silent and invisible.

As soon as Hunter had considered the reports of his staff he deployed the whole force on the plateau, facing towards the town and river, but with the left thrown slightly back. The 10th Sudanese under Brevet Major Sidney held the more exposed left flank, with the 9th Sudanese next them ; the battery was in the middle, half the 3rd Egyptians on the right of the guns and the 11th Sudanese on the extreme right with its flank on the river. The infantry brigade was commanded by MacDonald.

At 6.30 A.M. our guns broke silence and under cover of their fire the infantry advanced to the crest of the plateau, halted, fixed bayonets and awaited orders, overlooking the houses. The battery then took ground to the right to enfilade the walls. Our shells were now bursting in the houses, but still the enemy made no sign. Only some affrighted hens cackled in panic on the roof-tops. To those unacquainted with Dervish tactics the place might seem untenanted. The pause enabled officers to examine their objective. Then the advance sounded and the force moved down the slope and was at once received by an outburst of rifle fire from concealed trenches and loopholed houses. This was the Dervish surprise on which they had expended much cunning. Hunter rode ahead of the advancing line amid a hail of bullets, and the men dropped fast, especially on the left flank. Here the 10th Sudanese, in a few moments, had their commanding officer and a bimbashi shot dead and a number of men killed and wounded. The fire at short range was so galling to our infantry on the exposed slope that Hunter resolved to

rush the place and bring the matter to an immediate issue. He accordingly directed the maxims to enfilade the enemy's firing line and then sounded the advance and the double. Exasperated at the loss of their beloved officers and eager, as always, for a hand-to-hand fight, the blacks rushed down-hill upon the trenches, regardless of the hot fire which thinned their ranks, and bayoneted or shot every Baggara who stood to his post. Passing over their bodies, they stormed the walls, swarmed into the town and dispersed through its narrow streets and alleys, clearing the enemy out of houses and courtyards as they proceeded. By 7.30 the place was in our possession, after an hour's warm work. But a few desperate men still held out, killing all who approached them and refusing on any condition to surrender. In one house nine such fanatics defended themselves till the afternoon and were only quieted by having the building blown to pieces by shells at close range.

The Egyptian casualties were two British officers killed—Major Sidney and Lieutenant FitzClarence—and 24 men killed and 64 wounded, of whom 21 died in the night. Among the Dervish garrison the loss was heavier, as must generally happen with the beaten side. Over 400 were either killed or too severely wounded to escape, and 152 unwounded prisoners were captured, including Mohamed-el-Zain and other chiefs. The Baggara horse and remnants of the riflemen fled towards Berber along the Nile and, meeting reinforcements some twenty miles from the scene of action, spread news of the disaster and arrested the advance of their friends. At Abu Hamed the local tribesmen who had fought for our enemy swam the river under a hail of bullets, and dispersed themselves discreetly amongst the peaceful inhabitants of Mograt island. Mean-

while our infantry, tired by perpetual night marching, was not required to pursue—because it would have been detrimental to the Sirdar's plan of campaign to send detachments beyond Abu Hamed before the railway reached it. Hunter, therefore, established his outposts along a ridge of hills to the south, brought up his supplies from their temporary zariba, quartered his battalions in the larger houses of the town, gave them six hours in which to work off arrears of sleep and proceeded to fortify and entrench against attack from the south.

Next day all the empty camels and mules were despatched to the base near Merawi for further provisions, together with the Dervish prisoners and our sick and wounded—for the problem of feeding the Abu Hamed brigade taxed the Sirdar's slender resources to the utmost. From Korosko in Egypt, from Railhead in mid-desert, from the Dongola Province, strings of laden camels were directed on Abu Hamed, each animal bearing its maximum load of 360 lb., of which half consisted of the forage it would consume on the journey. Thus each camel which survived the long marches deposited one 180-lb. sack of food-stuff at Abu Hamed, as a contribution towards the total of 15,000 lb. of grain required by Hunter's column every day. And the reader will perceive, through a simple calculation, how difficult it was to ration one brigade by camel-transport even when it was not raided, and how impossible would have been the task of supplying several brigades across the southern deserts, where convoys would certainly have been ambushed by mounted Dervishes.

The news of Hunter's victory was conveyed by swift riders to the Sirdar; railway construction was energetically resumed in mid-desert; the laden camels

started on their weary journeys; and the gunboats and sailing-boats forthwith commenced to ascend the forbidding cataracts which had never before been surmounted by such craft. Whilst bustle and strenuous work were the order of the day along two busy lines of communication, the scene of interest was moving from the Dongola to the Berber Province, the base of operations was shifting from Merawi to Wadi Halfa, and Dongola was henceforward relegated to a mere siding on the lines of communication.

The step forward to Abu Hamed, timed as it was to coincide with the Nile's full flood, ought to have been followed by a halt in the operations—whilst the railway and the cataracts received attention. But events moved too fast for a policy of calculated progression, and Kitchener was compelled to occupy the town of Berber and hold 150 additional miles of the Nile, within a month of the battle of Abu Hamed and many months before he was prepared for such a responsibility. War has its surprises in the Sudan as elsewhere. The Dongola campaign of 1896, starting at a moment's notice and without forethought, surprised us with its floods of rain and epidemic of cholera; but the Berber campaign of 1897—undertaken with studied care and a determined preference for caution—astonished us by the dangerous rapidity of its success.

As soon as Hunter had prepared Abu Hamed for defence, he sent forward a contingent of friendly Ababda Arabs on camels, to reconnoitre and report. They proceeded through a disturbed country, spreading rumours that they were merely the advanced-guard of an immense force. Under ordinary circumstances the falseness of such reports would have been discovered by the enemy and the Arabs would

have been promptly ambushed and killed. But Zaki Osman, the Dervish Emir, incensed because neither the Khalifa nor Mahmud would send him substantial reinforcements, abandoned Berber in disgust, and marched away south, leaving chaos and consternation amongst the tribes of the place. Our Arabs met one Dervish patrol which they defeated; then marched on boldly to the city, and took formal possession of its grain-store in the name of the Sirdar. Abu Hamed had been captured on August 7. On September 2, Hunter telegraphed to Kitchener the astonishing news that Berber also had fallen; was he to occupy it or not?

Rarely in Lord Kitchener's eventful life has he been asked a question more difficult to answer or one requiring a more immediate and definite reply.

At that date Berber and the mouth of the Atbara constituted the most important strategic position in the Sudan—distant only seventy-five miles from Metemma and Mahmud's powerful army. To occupy and hold it in strength was therefore the most desirable of all military events. But to occupy it with a weak force, dependent upon insecure communications, meant surrendering the initiative of the whole campaign to the enemy, and none knew better than Kitchener the value of retaining in his own hands the power of the initiative—the secret of military success. If the Khalifa, or Mahmud or even Osman Digna (who, with 2000 men, occupied Adarama on the Atbara, should elect to attack Berber with vigour or cut it off from the north, the chances of holding it would be small, and the campaign would assume very unpleasant proportions. During twelve hours Kitchener weighed all the consequences, decided in favour of the bolder course, telegraphed Hunter to occupy Berber and

himself rode there direct from Merawi to Berber with a small escort by the shortest route—170 miles across the Bayuda Desert.

Meanwhile Hunter at Abu Hamed lost no time—for a game of bluff, to be successful, must be played without hesitation. He put 350 men of the 9th Sudanese on the four available gunboats and disembarked them at Berber in two days' time. He then sent on the gunboats to shell and harass Zaki Osman's retiring force, and to create a general impression of our strength amongst the riparian tribes as far as Metemma. These measures had the effect of gaining time, just when time was of infinite value to the Egyptian army, scattered along a front of 300 miles from Dongola to Berber.

If during September, October or November Mahmud's Dervishes had attacked in force they would certainly have captured Berber and would probably have annihilated its weak garrison. But the Khalifa who was essentially a civilian, obstinately refused to permit Mahmud to attack. He remained convinced that the Sirdar and his infidel band would advance against Omdurman before the Nile fell, and was determined to concentrate and husband the whole of his strength in order to deal it a crushing blow near his city walls. He therefore ordered Osman Digna back to Shendi and redoubled his efforts to increase the Omdurman army by new levies. He collected stores of grain from distant provinces, built forts and additional walls round the city and rejected the advice of the fighting Emirs who counselled a policy of attack. He thus failed to profit by the initiative which had been temporarily surrendered to him and the golden opportunity was lost.

By January 1898, Berber and the Atbara fort were

sufficiently garrisoned to withstand a siege ; the road from Suakin was open ; the Eastern Sudan—relieved from the disturbing influence of Osman Digna—was inclined for peace ; the railway, completed to Abu Hamed, was steadily advancing towards the Atbara ; an Egyptian garrison had relieved the Italian force at Kassala and was in touch with the Abyssinian frontier ; our flotilla of gunboats patrolled the Nile to the Shabluka cataract, occasionally engaging the Metemma forts and keeping an ever-watchful eye upon Mahmud's army.

Thus far the reconquest of the Sudan had been accomplished by Egypt and her reorganised army, unaided by British troops.* Under the guidance of Kitchener and his officers, amongst whom Vandeleur was a bimbashi in the 9th Sudanese, much had been done ; but it was obvious to all concerned that the Khalifa's policy of concentration at Omdurman would compel England to despatch reinforcements for the final overthrow of the great Dervish army : and the question which engaged our thoughts was, would the British troops be placed under the Sirdar's command ? or would he and his army fight under a senior general from Pall Mall ?

* The British battalion which marched to Hafir and Dongola had immediately returned to Egypt.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE ATBARA, APRIL 1898.

See maps facing pages 208 *and* 238

THE following table shows the distribution of the troops in December 1897 and January 1898 and illustrates the facility for concentration conferred by the Desert Railway, without which this campaign could not have taken place.

Place.	*December* 1897.	*January* 1898.
Fort Atbara	½ Battalion Infantry 4 Gunboats	1 Squadron Cavalry (Bimbashi Le Gallais) 2 Companies Camel Corps (Bimbashi King) 2nd Battery Artillery (Bimbashi Peak) 3rd Egyptian Battalion (Sillem Bey) 4th Egyptian Battalion (Sparks Bey) 7th Egyptian Battalion (Fathy Bey) 15th Egyptian Battalion (Hickman Bey) 4 Gunboats (Commander Keppel)
Berber	2 Companies Camel Corps 1 Battery Artillery 4½ Battalions Infantry 1 Gunboat	2 Squadrons Cavalry (Broadwood Bey) 4th Battery Artillery (Bimbashi Lawrie) 5th Battery Artillery (Bimbashi de Rougemont) IXth Sudanese Battalion (Walter Bey) Xth Sudanese Battalion (Nason Bey)

Place.	*December* 1897.	*January* 1898.
Berber (*Cont.*)		XIth Sudanese Battalion (Jackson Bey) XIIth Sudanese Battalion (Townshend Bey) XIIIth Sudanese Battalion (Collinson Bey) XIVth Sudanese Battalion (Shekleton Bey) 1 Gunboat
Suakin	Detachment Garrison Artillery 1 Company Camel Corps 2½ Battalions Infantry	Half 5th Egyptian Battalion (a native officer)
Kassala	*Nil*	1 Company Camel Corps (native officer) 16th Egyptian Battalion (Nicholson Bey) Arab Battalion (lately Italian)
Between Berber and Abu Hamed	3½ Battalions Infantry	1st Egyptian Battalion (Heygate Bey) 2nd Egyptian Battalion (Pink Bey) Half 5th Egyptian Battalion (Borhan Bey) 8th Egyptian Battalion (Kalussi Bey)
Railhead at Dekeish (20 miles South of Abu Hamed)	*Nil*	Advance parties of Royal Warwickshire, Lincolnshire, and Cameron Highlanders, under Major Simpson 1 Battery Egyptian Horse Artillery (Bimbashi Young) 4 Squadrons Egyptian Cavalry (Bimbashi Mahon)
Wadi Halfa	1 Battalion Infantry	18th Egyptian Battalion (Matchett Bey)
Dongola Province	8 Squadrons Cavalry 5 Companies Camel Corps 3 Batteries Artillery 6 Battalions Infantry Detachments Garrison Artillery 3 Gunboats	1 Squadron Cavalry (depôt) 5 Companies Camel Corps (Tudway Bey) 3rd Battery Artillery (Bimbashi Stewart) 6th Egyptian Battalion (a native Bey) 17th Egyptian Battalion (Bunbury Bey)

Place.	*December* 1897.	*January* 1898.
Dongola Province		Detachments Garrison Artillery (Egyptian) 3 Gunboats
Between Railhead and Cairo	*Nil*	1st Batt. Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Lieut.-Col. Quayle Jones) 1st Batt. Lincolnshire Regiment (Colonel Verner) 1st Batt. Cameron Highlanders (Colonel Money)
Cairo	1st Battery Egyptian Horse Artillery 2 Battalions Egyptian Infantry (being raised) 3 Battalions British Infantry 1 Regiment British Cavalry 1 Battery R.F.A.	21st Lancers (Colonel Martin) 5th Fusiliers (from Gibraltar) 20th Lancashire Fusiliers (from Quetta) 87th Royal Irish Fusiliers (from Burmah) 1st Batt. Seaforth Highlanders (from Malta) 32nd Battery R.F.A.

Whilst the thoughts of those who interest themselves in the continued progress of the British Empire were directed towards Omdurman, its Dervish army and Kitchener's scattered garrisons ; and whilst the Military Clubs in London were still busily speculating on the name of the particular general who might command in the field, reports were reaching the Sirdar that the Khalifa was on the move. He had marshalled his host outside the walls of his city and was marching north in great strength—determined to attack us in Berber. This information came through such reliable channels that it could not be disbelieved, however unlikely it might seem, and in fact the Dervish army did set forth from Omdurman one day in January under the personal command of the Khalifa. Kitchener at once concentrated the Egyptian army in the Berber Province, by moving the Dongola garrisons back to Wadi Halfa and forward to Abu Hamed by train, as

shown in the table above. He telegraphed to Lord Cromer for the loan of one brigade of British infantry as reinforcement, and ordered an entrenched camp to be constructed at the gunboat depôt near the mouth of the Atbara River. These necessary precautions were most inconvenient both to the engineer subalterns engaged on railway construction and to the inadequate camel-transport, employed at several small cataracts which made their unwelcome appearance between Abu Hamed and Berber as the Nile fell.

Meanwhile the Khalifa's march northwards came to a halt. Difficulties of transport and of food-supply confronted him at the outset. Neither he nor any other man can improvise supply and transport services at a moment's notice. Moreover, he began to perceive that he was not quite *soldier* enough to conduct a great military enterprise to success. He therefore hesitated, called together a council of war, mistrusted its advice but yet feared to delegate to any of the fighting Emirs the command of his precious troops. Finally he moved the army back to Omdurman and ordered Mahmud's division to attack Berber from Metemma. Now, if this decision had been arrived at and acted upon between September and January it might have resulted in a Dervish victory. But in February—owing to the power of rapid concentration possessed by the Egyptians through their growing railway—the Khalifa's belated order to Mahmud merely courted an unnecessary defeat and illustrated the danger of entrusting military policy to a ruler however capable, devoid of military instinct. Our own British history abounds in similar misfortunes. For several months, Mahmud who was gifted with a soldier's eye had implored the Khalifa to let him attack Berber whilst its garrison was still weak, but his appeal was merely snubbed and

refused. Now that Berber was stronger he received supplies of ammunition and the order to attack. He accordingly crossed the Nile with 15,000 fighting men, joined Osman Digna's contingent at Shendi, and opened the stirring campaign which tested Kitchener's capacity as a general and the quality of the Egyptian army, as they had not been tested before. Although one brigade of British infantry joined in the fray, it was wisely decided not to supersede Kitchener or in any way interfere with his unfettered conduct of the operations. The British infantry was therefore placed entirely under his command as soon as its various units passed southwards of Assouan. Thus for the first time in our recent history—so far as my knowledge goes—a British general, selected for proved efficiency, commanded an army which, excepting the British brigade, he had had ample time and opportunity to equip, organise and train, in respect of every detail—including finance, stores, enlistments, arms, clothing, ammunition, promotion of officers and selection of staffs—with a result which justified the experiment and may lead to its future adoption, even in India.

It is, however, instructive to note that this general was technically the servant of the Khedive of Egypt who paid him, and that, even when he commanded auxiliary British troops, he remained in foreign employ and fought under a foreign flag. He received his orders, not from the War Office, but from Lord Cromer, and thus enjoyed a position of freedom for his military arrangements and of personal responsibility for their success, which has rarely been conferred on a Commander-in-Chief in the field.

When, on the present occasion, the boots of the British infantry proved unserviceable and its ammnition defective, observers recognised the working of that

time-honoured procedure which deprives individuals of responsibility and shifts the blame for defects from one departmental office to another. During the years which intervened between Waterloo and Colenso, we perfected in peace a system of minimising a commander's power and, by means of elaborate regulations, promoted the art of evading personal censure into an exact science. If the boots or ammunition of an Egyptian brigade had been faulty, somebody would certainly have been "hanged" for neglect. But England's unfortunate habit of hurriedly assembling battalions, and sending them forth to fight her battles—under a general who is a complete stranger to them and a scratch staff appointed for the occasion —makes efficient supervision impossible. Yet, if the British brigade which fought on the Atbara had been trained for only one month in Egypt under its own brigadier, minor defects would have been remedied before instead of after the commencement of hostilities, and the force would have started as an organised unit instead of a heterogeneous assemblage of battalions. But, instead of fairly facing any military problem and acting with average foresight, we prefer to muddle through somehow, trusting to luck to give us a general who will get us out of the difficulties into which we drift. In this instance we were fortunate enough to pitch on Kitchener and may take credit for sticking to him when found.

Let us then return to Berber where the units were gathering for the campaign which their general had long foreseen, and for which he had trained a foreign army, at the expense of a foreign State.

The three weeks' operations upon which we now enter present a striking example of what is called offensive-defensive tactics. To understand this clearly

we should realise the objects which Kitchener and Mahmud each desired to attain, and we can then appreciate the logical sequence of the separate events and not merely dwell upon marches and reconnaissances as exciting incidents and view the battle as a purposeless slaughter on an accidental field.

The audacity of Hunter's first occupation of Berber with a mere handful of men was discussed in a previous chapter, and the hazard which was then deliberately courted can be measured by the effort now made to defeat Mahmud's attack—an effort which would certainly have overstrained our force, if the Khalifa had launched his full strength upon the enterprise. For the battle of the Atbara was fought solely in defence of Berber, to ward off Mahmud's unsupported attack, and it would never have been fought at all, but for the Emir's determination to throw himself into the city in a headlong rush. For he calculated that his adversary would wait for him in Berber and try to hold it by passive defence. To sit down behind entrenchments and utilise the labour of thousands of soldiers to strengthen a position into a so-called "impregnable" stronghold offers a temptation which few commanders resist. Yet, in spite of the high proficiency which military engineering has attained, the misuse of fortification has probably caused more disasters than any other accepted theory of war, because generals are not all gifted with the trained imagination which alone can tell them when to trust to mobility and where to discard spade-work. Thus Mahmud and his Emirs argued quite reasonably that they would close on Berber and discover some way of breaking into it, and that, even if they failed to do this, they would certainly succeed in destroying the railway which supplied its garrison. In fact their plan

of campaign, though undertaken too late, was not a stupid one, and might have led to success even at the eleventh hour — on the assumption that Kitchener would defend Berber at Berber itself.

But, unluckily for Mahmud, the Sirdar adopted a different plan of defence to that which was expected of him. He marched his whole force—except one Egyptian battalion—out of the town as soon as the gunboats reported that the Dervishes were moving in earnest. Representatives of the merchants and the civil population remonstrated and entreated in vain. Those who were loyal were served out with rifles and ammunition to protect their property from the disloyal, and the army remained free and mobile, unhampered by passive defence or the civilian pressure which sometimes mars a campaign.

By the middle of March Kitchener had concentrated his force at the village of Kunur on the right bank of the Nile, some five miles from the mouth of the Atbara and eighteen miles south of Berber. Mahmud on the same date was moving northwards from Shendi to Aliab along the same bank of the river, and the head of his marching column was distant some fifty miles from Kitchener's camp. The position of these places, whose inhabitants had fled from Dervish raids and massacre, can be seen on the map on page 238, and it is also important to notice the peculiar course of the Atbara—whose bed at low water presented a waste of sand-banks studded by deep pools—enclosed within a wide belt of palm-trees and impenetrable thorn thickets. The surrounding country, irrigated and fertile when the Atbara rises in flood, was in March a mere desert across which sand-storms and wind-devils swept, beneath a brazen sun. Yet the nights were cool and the climate healthy, owing

to the pure dry breezes which blew from the north.

ANGLO-EGYPTIAN ARMY DURING THE ATBARA OPERATIONS

Concentrated at Kunur and Fort Atbara on March 16, 1898.

Sirdar.—(Commander-in-Chief) Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener.

Cavalry—Lieut.-Colonel Broadwood.
Eight Egyptian squadrons and four Egyptian maxim guns (horsed). One Battery Egyptian Horse Artillery.

Camel-Corps.—Major Tudway.
Six companies (Egyptian and Sudanese).

Artillery.—Lieut.-Colonel Long.
Three Egyptian Batteries, small guns carried on pack mules.
Six maxim guns (British gun detachments).
One Naval Rocket Detachment.

Transport Corps (Camels)—Lieut.-Colonel Walter Kitchener.

Infantry (Except British Brigade).—Major-General Hunter.

British Brigade.—Major-General Gatacre. 1st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (less two companies at Dongola). 1st Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, 1st Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders. Field Hospital.

MacDonald's Brigade.—Lieut.-Colonel Hector MacDonald. 2nd Egyptian Battalion, 9th Sudanese Battalion, 10th Sudanese Battalion, 11th Sudanese Battalion. Field Hospital.

Maxwell's Brigade.—Lieut.-Colonel Maxwell. 8th Egyptian Battalion, 12th Sudanese Battalion, 13th Sudanese Battalion, 15th Sudanese Battalion. Field Hospital.

Lewis's Brigade.—Lieut.-Colonel Lewis. 3rd Egyptian Battalion, 4th Egyptian Battalion, 7th Egyptian Battalion, 15th Egyptian Battalion. Field Hospital.

Gunboats.—Commander Colin Keppel, R.N.
Four Gunboats, patrolling the Nile.

Total Strength = 12,000 combatants.

Of the above, Lewis's Brigade was at Fort Atbara, the remainder at Kunur—the whole in readiness to move

at a moment's notice, waiting only for Mahmud's intentions to be translated into action.

With the exception of two officers attached to the headquarter staff and the usual staff of a British brigade, the whole of the staff-work was performed by officers of the Egyptian army—mostly bimbashis under thirty years of age. The supply, transport, and intelligence departments were also found by the Egyptian army.

The advantage of Kunur as a point of concentration will be apparent after a glance at the map on page 238. If Mahmud elected to cross the fordable Atbara near its mouth and attack the fort at the confluence, Kitchener could make a five-mile march from Kunur and fall on the Dervish flank, whilst Lewis's brigade engaged it in front; should Mahmud evade the fort and attempt to cross the Atbara at Hudi, twenty-five miles from Berber, Kitchener could forestall him by a ten-mile march to the same place; while, should Mahmud cross the Atbara at a point higher up and then make for Berber, Kitchener could keep him moving in the desert and attack him from a base on the Nile. Thus Kunur secured to Kitchener what is technically termed the interior line and relegated Mahmud to the longer, exterior line of operation.

Having disposed the army in a good strategic situation, early and accurate news of the march of the Dervishes from Aliab was of paramount importance, and right well was the Sirdar served by the gunboats on the Nile and the cavalry watching the line of the Atbara. The initiative still lay with Mahmud, and the camp at Kunur buzzed with conflicting rumour and amateur strategy—both in the English and Arabic languages. The only man who never gave out his views was the silent Sirdar. But every day he practised

the brigades in the special formations required for desert warfare, and so a week passed in useful preparation and high expectation on the part of the troops. On Saturday March 19, Mahmud's army began to move inland from Aliab towards Hudi with the intention of carrying out the second alternative suggested above. But Kitchener promptly forestalled his adversary by sending the cavalry to Hudi the same day, following it up on Sunday with the remainder of the army. The British brigade was at Divine Service in the open air when the order to march arrived. That evening the Kunur force joined Lewis's brigade at Hudi, and thus occupied the very place which Mahmud had selected for his own camp on the same date. One battalion remained in Fort Atbara to safeguard the base. Mobility, aided by early and accurate information, had already won a victory at a cost of fifteen cavalry casualties, and Mahmud's advance-guard was obliged to deflect its movement to the east. His whole force arrived that night at Nakheila after a magnificent forty-mile march across the desert—a fine example of Dervish endurance and discipline—though at Nakheila it was no nearer to Berber than it had been at Aliab.

Next morning Kitchener pushed his advantage by moving the Anglo-Egyptian camp to Ras-el-Hudi six miles further up the river, where it makes a bend in its course. Here he guarded the lower course of the Atbara and his own communications, he remained on or near the line of any Dervish advance on Berber, he lengthened that line by keeping the enemy well up-stream, and at the same time he interposed his concentrated force between Mahmud and his objective. Meanwhile the infantry halted, whilst the mounted troops endeavoured to clear up the situation by reconnaissance.

So far, in the preliminary moves for position, Kitchener had outmanœuvred his opponent and shouldered him away from Berber, but the menace still threatened. Mahmud's hardy warriors might yet achieve success.

In a previous chapter a favourable opinion was expressed regarding the Khalifa's wisdom in concentrating his strength at Omdurman when his Dongola garrisons were routed in 1896, as it would then have been futile to attempt the reconquest of the northern province. But a policy of concentration, to be effective, must include a determination to strike decisive blows when favourable opportunity may offer. Yet we saw how the Khalifa forgot this elementary truth when the Egyptian advanced-guard reached Berber in 1897. One or two blunders may, however, be forgiven to any statesman or soldier who profits by realising his own mistakes. But the Khalifa learned nothing by experience. On the Atbara he launched Mahmud against Berber but obstinately refused to support the enterprise with reserve troops—just when a reserve was obviously indispensable. The mere presence of 10,000 Dervishes at Aliab—after Mahmud reached Nakheila—would have greatly facilitated this Emir's task by endangering Kitchener's communications between Fort Atbara and Ras-el-Hudi. Indeed it is doubtful whether Kitchener could have maintained his position if a substantial Dervish body had threatened him from Aliab, and this view is strengthened by the fact that on March 26, the Sirdar sent a battalion, a battery and three gunboats to raid and reconnoitre the Dervish communications with Omdurman. This expedition landed south of Shendi, attacked Mahmud's depôt, captured its supplies and returned to report that no reinforcements were moving north-

wards from Omdurman. The information was to be of great value to Kitchener, as it permitted him to deal with Mahmud single-handed at his own time, and enabled him to put his full force into the fighting line whenever he should decide to strike a blow. Even the astute and experienced Osman Digna, who had often bested disciplined white troops around Suakin, could now offer Mahmud neither hope of evading the Sirdar nor prospect of attacking him at an advantage. In fact the initiative was slipping from Mahmud's hands into Kitchener's, and the rest of the story discloses how the latter made use of this power and how the Dervish army met its fate at Nakheila—officially named the Battle of Atbara.

The mere presence of the Anglo-Egyptian force at Ras-el-Hudi—instead of at Berber—was a sore puzzle to Mahmud. It upset his plans, and left him with the choice between an immediate attack or an ignominious retreat. He chose neither, and thereby surrendered the initiative completely. But he arranged to conceal his army in a cunning defensive position in the thickets near Nakheila, whilst the arch-marauder Osman Digna went to recover certain valuable grain stores, which he had secreted in the desert on leaving Adarama. Thus the opposing armies sat down within twenty miles of one another, waiting, watching and uncertain—until Kitchener should make up his mind how he would deal with Mahmud. But before he could settle this, he had to discover Mahmud's exact position, and the task of locating it devolved on the Egyptian cavalry. It numbered only 800 troopers. The Arab horse were some 3000 men. They were now to be pitted against one another during a fortnight of incessant reconnaissance.

Every day at dawn some of Broadwood's squadrons

rode forth to reconnoitre and skirmish towards Nakheila—in the scrub, over miles of undulating desert, on stony ground, or across dry *khors* fissured and cracked by the action of the sun on a wet surface. It was not an easy country for cavalry. The wide belt of mimosa-trees and dôm-palms by the river was fresh and green and beautiful to behold owing to the rich alluvial soil deposited by the annual flood. Brilliant parrots and other bright birds flitted amongst the trees. The stagnant pools in the river-bed were crowded with crocodiles and big fish waiting patiently for the flood. Dainty gazelles hurried across the open desert, disturbed by the opposing horsemen or scared by the sharp crack of rifle fire in a silent landscape. But it was a period of anxious work for the bimbashis of cavalry, commanding Fellaheen troopers endowed with no natural aptitude for either riding or raiding, in conflict with Baggara Arabs who were experts at both. Every day the patrols encountered superior numbers of the enemy, lost men and horses, gained confidence in themselves, procured knowledge of the strange country and returned at nightfall—dogged back to their camp by an enemy with whom they had fought rear-guard actions all the afternoon.

Yet the main Dervish position had not been discovered at the end of ten such weary days and Mahmud still made no sign of moving. A single Egyptian squadron could by no means pierce the Arab *cordon* and the state of uncertainty threatened to be prolonged. The Sirdar, therefore, decided to risk his whole mounted force on a decisive reconnaissance, in order to break through the Arab horse and examine the Dervish stronghold at close quarters. He entrusted Broadwood with the enterprise, and sent Hunter and some staff officers—unhampered by the cares of

executive command—to examine and report on the enemy's position. A deserter from Mahmud was impressed as guide, and the following units marched from Ras-el-Hudi very early on March 30—eight squadrons cavalry, one battery horse-artillery, four galloping maxims and a brigade of infantry.

As the day's outing might involve an engagement and would certainly necessitate a forty- to fifty-mile march, the supporting infantry proceeded a portion of the distance to await developments in a defensive position. The mounted troops trotted continuously forward, brushed aside several strong bodies of Baggaras, and—piloted by their Dervish guide—made straight for Mahmud's hidden position. The very boldness of this manœuvre, the sudden appearance of a compact force in their midst disconcerted the Dervishes. They apprehended that their defences would be instantaneously assaulted and stood by to defend them with strict orders to hold their fire for close ranges. As the only object of the reconnaissance was to see clearly not fight, a near view was essential. Accordingly, the horse artillery and maxims opened at 1000 yards on the blurred line—dancing in a mirage—which represented the enemy's camp, in the hope of attracting attention and inducing the Dervishes to show themselves. Meanwhile Hunter and four staff officers rode towards the place and actually got within 300 yards of it before they realised what it was. Then as they topped a slope the waving lines resolved themselves into zaribas, palisades and trenches at least a mile in length, one behind the other, enclosing an immense area, swarming with Dervishes. It was a sight which these adventurous officers will never forget. They had accomplished in a few moments the whole object of their enterprise and at once rode back to the guns

and attendant squadrons. The force then withdrew to its infantry support as rapidly as it had come—followed by the enemy for ten miles, but never seriously engaged. It was a smart piece of work, and the news that Mahmud's stronghold had at last been seen was satisfactory alike to the Sirdar and all ranks of the army.

A few days later the camp was moved to Abadar six miles nearer the enemy and on April 5, the mounted troops again undertook a similar reconnaissance, supported by the 9th Sudanese (Vandeleur being with it) and the 10th Sudanese—in order to further investigate the best method of arranging our infantry assault. Hunter, Maxwell, and Long—the latter officer deputed to select artillery positions—accompanied Broadwood, in order to familiarise themselves with the approaches to the place and advise as to the best plan of attacking it. But, on approaching to within 1200 yards, Broadwood perceived that a reception very different from the last awaited his second reconnaissance. Directly his leading squadrons had crossed the front of the zariba to "make good" the ground beyond, a cloud of Baggara horsemen, superior in numbers to the Egyptian force, emerged from the south end of the camp and trotted through the scrub towards the desert. Our squadrons and guns in compact order moved on at a walk until the force was concentrated opposite the zariba which lay 1000 yards to the right flank, and, meanwhile, the officers watched the continuous extension of these hostile horsemen who evidently aimed at enveloping the Egyptian front and left flank. Next it was noticed that another considerable body of Arab horse were issuing from the northern end of the camp and threatened to cut off the Egyptian retreat. The long, flat-bladed spears glinting in the morning sun and the

dust raised by so many bodies of cantering horsemen plainly disclosed the intention of the enemy to surround our diminutive force. Meanwhile the palisades and entrenchments of the position literally swarmed with Dervish spectators watching the progress of events, and their guns, concealed in a dozen emplacements, opened fire with loud reports and puffs of white smoke owing to their use of black powder. Evidently the situation though picturesque bore a serious aspect and would require cool and judicious handling. Broadwood decided to deal with one phase at a time, avoided dispersing his force and relied on the discipline and training of his squadrons to counter-balance the vastly superior numbers of the enemy.

The battery opened fire at 1800 yards on the Baggaras extending in front, the horse-artillery and maxims coming quickly into action with damaging effect. Broadwood next detached two squadrons under Major Le Gallais to deal with the Dervishes who menaced his right flank and rear, and two other squadrons under Captain Hon. E. Baring to protect his left. With the four remaining squadrons and the guns he moved cautiously forward—suspicious as always of Dervish ambuscades—towards the horsemen whom his guns had driven south. But, suddenly, the move forward was brought to a standstill by a solid line of dismounted spearmen, who rose out of a concealed *khor* between the guns and the distant horsemen and confronted Broadwood at 300 yards. This was the ambush. In well-ordered array, subdivided into regular companies headed by white flags the spearmen advanced. The four maxims came into action in an instant. The battery trotted back a couple of hundred yards to get a range. It then opened with case-shot. The squadrons retired at a

walk, alternately facing and threatening the foe. The promptness with which each unit acted prevented a catastrophe and the retreat was continued without confusion, whilst the spearmen's advance was temporarily checked.

But now the Dervish spectators in the position with one accord opened a sustained though wild fire. The range was too great for accuracy, but the effect, extremely galling as it was, was not allowed to hasten the retreat. Meanwhile the staff officers for nearly an hour had examined the ground. It was high time to withdraw. Indeed the order to do so was given none too soon.

Already on three sides Dervishes menaced the column in considerable numbers. The fourth side might shortly be closed. Baring on the desert flank was reinforced by one squadron but was pressed so hard when the retirement started that Broadwood sent him another, making four in all. Alternately the battery and maxims retreated a few hundred yards, faced about and poured out a damaging fire on the advancing foe. On the river flank, which now claimed the commander's attention, the Baggara horse made a bold attempt to cut in behind and capture the guns. This was frustrated only in the nick of time by Broadwood himself. He promptly took command of both squadrons on this flank, sounded the "advance," then the "charge" and—leading them in person—struck the loose assemblage of 400 Baggaras obliquely. The shock upset them. They were routed in a few moments and fell back. The squadrons were then rallied and dismounted, and directed to open carbine fire on the retreating enemy. Here we will leave them for the moment.

But meanwhile the precious guns were also in

danger from the pursuing spearmen in their front. So Baring with two squadrons from the desert flank galloped to the rescue, rode across the front of the guns and charged the enemy in flank. He routed them, broke them up and rode completely through them, but not without disordering his own command. When his troopers came out on the river flank, their companions were already dismounted and firing volleys as already described. Baring therefore rallied behind them, restored order in his squadrons and returned with them to his post on the left.

The two charges I have thus described, supplemented by the fire of the guns, maxims and troopers, temporarily checked the whole Dervish movement and saved the situation. An attack in force by the enemy's infantry still threatened and the white-robed riflemen were striding forward at a great pace. But Broadwood eluded the menace, withdrew his force at a trot and gradually shook off all pursuit. At 12 noon the mounted troops rejoined their infantry support and returned to camp with a loss of one British officer wounded, seven Egyptian troopers killed, eleven wounded and thirty horses disabled.

The behaviour of the Fellaheen trooper, the quality of his British bimbashi, the confidence placed in them by their commander were admirably displayed during this reconnaissance, and, if an infantry officer may venture an opinion, I would suggest that Broadwood's success was directly due to his system of training. Instead of fussy interference with details, he adopted the novel plan of allowing his bimbashis to really command their own squadrons. He recognised that two good officers may have two diametrically opposite methods of training men, yet may both produce excellent results. He supervised their work

with intelligent interest, but never insisted on rigid uniformity or strict adherence to minute rules. Years of personal experience had taught him what was important and what might be considered trivial and he obtained from his subordinates a whole-hearted devotion to sensible work, such as has rarely been equalled before or since. And he had his reward when the squadrons which he had created faced odds of five to one in a tight place and the regenerated Fellah of Egypt rode down the war-lord of the Sudan at a signal from a British bimbashi.

Next day the Anglo-Egyptian army moved on seven miles to Umdabia and marched on the following night to the assault of Mahmud's position.

The reconnaissances had been deliberate, thorough and somewhat prolonged. The army had approached their enemy by short marches at long intervals. But the final assault was swift and overwhelming. Its success was due to disciplined combination and to the practical and sensible arrangements made by British officers of the Egyptian staff, who had been working together at all kinds of soldiering during a number of years. This staff was accustomed to carry out its duties with the least amount of writing-paper and the fewest printed regulations, and was a live body—imbued with practical intelligence and resource. But it was not created in one day. Any nation can, in a crisis, enrol and arm a vast number of brave men, but it cannot improvise a staff, create habits of discipline or command military success by spending its money too late—this the Sudan proved, as also the South African and every other war ever waged.

On April 7, 1898, towards dusk, the troops fell in for their twelve-mile night march, an operation which is always critical and sometimes disastrous, though

absolutely necessary in tropical climates. No precaution which the Sirdar's experience could suggest was neglected. A staff officer, familiar with the country by daylight, guided the leading brigade. Careful patrolling guarded against surprise, and the four brigades marched in separate squares on a broad front ready to use their rifles if attacked. The cavalry remained in camp with orders to trot out and join the infantry before dawn, leaving a single battalion to guard the camp.

At 9 P.M., a halt was called, water was served out from camel-tanks and the men lay down to rest on the open desert, protected by vigilant sentries. A bitterly cold wind drove clouds of fine sand across the landscape and any soldier who strayed from his post would have had a difficulty in finding it again. The moon rose early and illumined the weird scene of thousands of uneasy sleepers lying in curious attitudes beside their rifles, in death-like silence, rank by rank. The reserve ammunition-mules and artillery pack-mules received special attention to prevent them braying when the moon appeared. At one o'clock the march was resumed, and those who saw it will not forget the strange sight and stranger sound of thousands of soldiers rising from the ground and stealthily moving forward in ordered array—with no word uttered above a whisper. Only the grating and monotonous crunch of shoe-leather on dry sand could be heard and it had a sinister sound, though none could foretell the event. At four there was another halt, but the bitter cold prevented sleep and only the glow of the enemy's fires visible above some distant palms afforded a point of interest to the waiting soldiery. Four miles now separated the combatants. At daylight the deployment from square into attack-formation was carried out according to programme—the British

brigade on the left, MacDonald's next, Maxwell's on the right, Lewis's in reserve, the batteries in the intervals between brigades—and thus the machine moved towards Mahmud's position with bayonets fixed. The value of the cavalry reconnaissances, the accuracy of the staff leading, the precision and timing of the night march were evident to all ranks, as the army strode without concealment straight towards the thorn thickets, where Mahmud had been waiting for nearly three weeks. It halted on a gentle slope, some 900 yards from the enemy's zariba, and here at 6.15 A.M., the infantry sat down to watch the opening of the battle by the artillery.

Three mule-batteries and the horse-artillery took part, twenty-four guns in all. *Thud! phutt!!* went the first discharge, and we all looked hard as the shell burst well above the entrenchments in the middle of the enemy's camp. A pale yellow flash in the midst of a ball of white smoke marked the exact spot, and then the *crack!* of the explosion came faintly back, like an echo, from the smoky-grey mist which hung over the place. That first gun resembled a toy explosion in a toy battle, but, when report followed report in quick succession and the air above the trenches became dotted with white puffs dealing out shrapnel bullets and the cannonade grew ever louder as the projectiles were multiplied, one realised that serious business was on hand. Then gradually, the strange scene became almost monotonous, and many a weary infantry-man dozed into sleep, whilst the Egyptian gunners plied their trade and searched with the precision of their arm the whole interior of the circular encampment.* The cavalry and maxims guarded the flanks which were threatened but not attacked by the Baggara horse.

* See plan facing page 208.

After the shelling commenced the Dervish position presented the appearance of a deserted place, and those who had not accompanied the reconnaissances could scarcely believe it contained 15,000 fighting men—waiting, as the event proved, to pour out a heavy fire at the closest range. A number of coloured banners, a few camels and donkeys, an occasional *jibba*-clad Dervish—strolling with contemptuous unconcern amidst shrapnel bullets—were alone visible. All else seemed empty and lifeless behind the stockade and breastwork which ran along the front, covered by a thorn zariba. The naval rockets set fire to some grass huts and dry palm-trees and the smoke mingled with shell puffs in the still air. For an hour and a quarter the Egyptian gunners distributed a continuous hail of shrapnel and expended a great quantity of ammunition in their relentless methodical manner.

At 7.40 A.M. the guns ceased fire, Kitchener sounded the general advance and 9000 infantry swept majestically into action in a thin line, strengthened at intervals by supports. From flank to flank it was three-quarters of a mile long, and looked very business-like. Let us accompany Bimbashi Vandeleur and the 9th Sudanese into the fray, in which they took a prominent part sharing with five other Sudanese battalions the brunt of the close fighting and the heaviest casualties. Vandeleur led the right wing of his battalion and was posted near the centre of the whole line in command of his two companies of blacks.

During the first few hundred yards the advance was deliberate and slow, and several halts were made for volley firing; but with the cessation of the rain of shells on the Dervish trenches, their unharmed riflemen put up their heads and opened a continuous fire from breastwork and stockade which, as by magic, bristled

with defenders. To advance slowly, halt and shoot volleys merely exposed our men to unnecessary loss without subduing the enemy's fire. Accordingly the "charge" was sounded, and the eager Sudanese followed their beloved British officers in a rush at the Dervish trenches—with the bands playing and colours flying, just as in the days of Marlborough's great fights. Vandeleur claimed that one of his companies got first over the zariba, whilst the British brigade was delayed by a special drill they had invented for overcoming this obstacle. Practically the whole line got over at about the same time. Yet the enemy stuck to their posts like brave men and let off their rifles in the faces of their assailants with deadly effect. But the impetuosity of the Sudanese and the drilled discipline of the Highlanders carried them over the breastwork and stockade in spite of severe punishment, and those of the defenders who were not immediately shot down were subsequently bayoneted by the supports which followed.

The line moved on into the interior shooting at close quarters, and such was the fierce nature of the enemy that wounded Dervishes would rise from the trenches behind our backs and fire at our men with exasperating accuracy. The whole interior of the camp was honeycombed into a labyrinth of irregular trenches, pits and deep holes, in which men, donkeys, camels and even women had been sheltered during the cannonade. They were now defended with the courage of fanaticism and had to be cleared as they were encountered, for, though the enemy were at last bolting towards the Atbara, isolated bands would neither run away nor accept or give quarter. It was just a case of bullet and bayonet and butt, and resembled a hideous nightmare in which the deafening

BATTLE OF THE ATBARA

8th April 1898.

The Infantry Assault on the Dervish Position

Zariba — British — Red

Stockade — Dervishes — Blue

Trench or Pit

Hut or Tent

Scale, 6" = 1 Mile 1/10560

100 0 500 1000 YARDS

Stanford's Geogl Estabt, London

roar of musketry never ceased. Our men fought their way for half a mile through this curious encampment, now the scene of such slaughter and destruction as a fight to a finish must always produce.

The action ended at the river's bank three-quarters of an hour after the infantry started, and we were then able to congratulate ourselves on a complete victory. Anything less would merely have led to a repetition of the combat at an early date, which nobody at that moment desired—not even the jubilant Sudanese who crowded round their officers with joyous beaming faces and insisted on shaking hands all round—first a short shake, then a salute, another shake and another salute, accompanied by proud grins. These are the men who deliberately run ahead of their officers to try and stop the bullets where the fire is hottest, so how can any one be surprised that their officers believe in them and place them amongst the best fighting troops in existence ? They have dash and pluck and endurance, and plenty of steadiness when carefully officered and strictly disciplined ; but above all they are intensely human and should never be treated like machines.

From Vandeleur's diary I find that his two companies lost five killed and twenty-eight wounded, and his battalion seventy-three killed and wounded out of a strength of 717 in action. The hard fighting was practically all done by eight battalions—namely, the Seaforth Highlanders, the Cameron Highlanders and six Sudanese battalions, total about 5700 bayonets. Their casualties amounted to 473, which works out at over 8 per cent. The casualties in the whole force numbered nineteen British officers and 533 other ranks, British and Egyptian.

Mahmud was captured by the 10th Sudanese and paraded in triumph through the streets of Berber.

One thousand one hundred other prisoners were taken. Some 3000 Dervishes were killed, more were wounded, the remainder escaped, but ceased to be in any sense an army during the remainder of the campaign. When the troops were all formed up and the wounded had been succoured, the Sirdar rode round the brigades and was received with such an ovation of cheers as only a successful general can ever experience—for there was not a man in the force but realised that he had been led to victory by Kitchener's brain and Kitchener's tactics.

Let those who feel inclined to scoff at all "savage warfare" reflect that England had been several times humiliated in her Sudan campaigns, and let them also try to picture what a catastrophe our defeat on the Atbara would have entailed.

CHAPTER IX

OMDURMAN, SEPTEMBER 1898.

See maps facing pages 232 and 238

THE defeat and dispersal of Mahmud's army at the Battle of the Atbara in April removed the only formidable body of Dervishes from Kitchener's path to Omdurman, and the Khalifa did not deem it prudent to send forward another contingent to delay the next blow. Military critics in England thereupon suggested that the Anglo-Egyptian force ought at once to follow up their victory and advance upon the city before its defenders were ready. The suggestion would have been wise and appropriate in nine campaigns out of ten, but its authors failed to appreciate the essential feature of the river war—namely the Nile flood. In April and May it was at its lowest. In June it would begin to rise and would continue rising throughout July and August. In September it would reach its highest point and then commence slowly to subside. August would therefore be the month to start on an offensive campaign. Moreover the intense heat of a Sudan summer and the risk of exposing the health of British soldiers to the fatigues of marches at night and halts in shadeless bivouacs by day rendered it advisable to defer the campaign to the autumn. Finally the Sirdar was not ready to start and was not the man to start before he was ready.

Railhead had not reached even Berber. The new

gunboats, travelling in parcels between England and Fort Atbara, could not be put together until the railway could deposit them near open water. Food, fodder, ammunition and steamer-fuel for several months must be accumulated and provided with transport. Sailing-boats must wait till half-flood before they could be hauled over cataracts. Telegraph lines take time to lay but are essential in modern war. In fact a hurried advance after the Atbara would have entailed vexatious delays at a critical stage later on. So the army retired into summer quarters under the substantial roofs of Berber and neighbouring villages, whilst Kitchener and all the departmental services made adequate preparation for future events. During four long weary months they toiled without rest beneath a pitiless sun. Along the 1400 miles of communications stores were pushed forward day and night, and where the Sirdar himself watched and planned work was got through quickest and best. Even impossibilities, as some said, were accomplished in the ordinary course of business, and the difficulty of getting articles to the front in the order of their relative importance was overcome, in spite of the six changes of vehicle which they made *en route*.

Thus by the end of July the railway terminus at Fort Atbara presented the appearance of a busy port containing streets of tinned beef-boxes, biscuits, blankets, barrels and bales, and more than 200 sailing-craft, whose tapering spars waved aloft as they rolled on the gentle billows of the broad river. At last both the Sirdar and the Nile flood were ready to move the troops, and on August 3, MacDonald's and Maxwell's Sudanese brigades embarked on troop-barges towed by steamers and started for the Shabluka cataract—150 miles to the south.

Vandeleur and the 9th Sudanese went in the first boat, heartily glad to exchange the monotony of Berber for the excitements of active service—his happy, smiling blacks packed tight as tinned sardines on the limited decks, whilst their wives gave them an enthusiastic send-off from the shore. The Nile in flood presented a magnificent and imposing spectacle as the volume of water, a mile broad, sped through this fertile province at the rate of five miles an hour. The steamer struggled slowly against the current, and Vandeleur had ample time to note the scene and speculate on the coming campaign. Shendi and Metemma and the fourteen pyramids of Meroë were passed, and he was particularly interested in an island noted as the legendary abode of the Queen of Sheba. But, as the business of the moment was war and an army was concentrating at Shabluka, the reader shall not be detained by reflections on this historic land, but shall at once be transported to the advanced camp, in which the troops detailed below were assembled by August 23—with orders to start next day on their fifty-mile march to Omdurman—

Sirdar. (Commander-in-Chief) Major-General Sir H. Kitchener.

Mounted Troops.

21st Lancers (Colonel Martin): four squadrons.
Egyptian Cavalry (Lieut.-Colonel Broadwood): nine squadrons.
Egyptian Artillery (Major Young): one battery, four maxim guns.
Camel Corps (Major Tudway): eight Egyptian Companies.
Field Hospital, Captain Hill-Smith.

Artillery.—Lieut.-Colonel Long.

British.—32nd Field Battery (Major Williams), 37th Howitzer Battery (Major Elmslie), two Forty-pounder guns, six maxim guns.

Egyptian.—Four Batteries, carried by pack-mules.

Ammunition Columns—1st. Column (Camel Transport), 2nd Column (Water Transport).

Infantry.

The British Division (Major-General Gatacre).

1st Brigade [Brig.-General Wauchope]: 1st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Lieut.-Colonel Forbes), 1st Battalion Lincoln Regiment (Lieut.-Colonel Lowth), 1st Battalion Seaforth Highlanders (Colonel Murray), 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders (Colonel Money), two maxim guns, Field Hospital.

2nd Brigade [Brig.-General Hon. N. Lyttelton]: 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards (Colonel Hatton), 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel Money), 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel Collingwood), 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade (Colonel Howard), two maxim guns, Field Hospital.

The Egyptian Division (Major-General Hunter).

(1) MacDonald's Brigade [Lieut.-Colonel Hector MacDonald]: 2nd Egyptian Battalion (Major Pink), 9th Sudanese Battalion (Major Walter), 10th Sudanese Battalion (Major Nason), 11th Sudanese Battalion (Major Jackson), Field Hospital (Captain Spong), two maxim guns.

(2) Maxwell's Brigade [Lieut.-Colonel Maxwell]: 8th Egyptian Battalion (Kalussi Bey), 12th Sudanese Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel Townshend), 13th Sudanese Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel Smith-Dorrien), 14th Sudanese Battalion (Major Shekleton), Field Hospital (Captain Dunn), two maxim guns.

(3) Lewis's Brigade [Lieut.-Colonel Lewis]: 3rd Egyptian Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel Sillem), 4th Egyptian Battalion (Major Sparkes), 7th Egyptian Battalion (Fathy Bey), 15th Egyptian Battalion (Major Hickman), Field Hospital (Captain Jennings), two maxim guns.

(4) Collinson's Brigade [Lieut.-Colonel Collinson]: 1st Egyptian Battalion (Major Doran), 6th Egyptian Battalion (A Native Bey), 17th Egyptian Battalion (Major Bunbury), 18th Egyptian Battalion (Captain Matchett), Field Hospital (Captain Whiston), two maxim guns.

Gunboats (Commander Colin Keppel, R.N.).

Ten gunboats of various patterns, carrying altogether thirty guns and twenty maxims—manned by Egyptian crews, commanded by British naval officers.

Transport.

3600 Camels (Lieut.-Colonel Walter Kitchener), 5 steamers, 206 sailing-boats (Captain Gorringe).

Total = 22,000 combatants.

The above army moved as a "flying Column," that is to say without lines of communications beyond Fort Atbara. By this arrangement the difficulties of

defending bases from raids was overcome, and all reserve stores moved forward in sailing-boats and steamers, which could accompany the march of the army and be moored at night on either bank of the river as required.

Some refreshing rain showers laid the desert dust and cooled the air during our first march from Shabluka, and the cataract was turned with ease and comfort by the troops—though difficulty was experienced in hauling laden boats up its narrow channel, which reduces the Nile's width to a few hundred yards and greatly increases its current. Beyond the cataract the problem was quite simple till we reached the neighbourhood of Omdurman. With cavalry spread out like a fan several miles ahead, with gunboats on the river flank and camel-corps on the desert flank, the stolid infantry brigades moved forward on a wide front (1½ miles) and accomplished about ten miles every day across a fairly level country covered by scrub and stunted trees. Of population there was none, as the Jaalin tribe had been almost wiped out of existence by Mahmud during the previous year.

Meanwhile the Khalifa, fully informed of our advance, appears from information gathered after the event to have planned that Kitchener, the accursed, should be enticed to the outskirts of Omdurman and there exterminated as Hicks had been exterminated in Kordofan. Like the President of the South African Republic, the Khalifa Abdullahi would wait till the tortoise poked its head out of its shell before he would deal it the death blow. The Baggara horse therefore retreated before our cavalry and evacuated Kerreri village without an encounter.

And thus it came to pass that on September 1, Kitchener, continuing his steady methodical movement,

crossed the Kerreri ridge, descended on to a bare level plain and bivouacked unopposed eight miles from Omdurman at the village of Agaiga, by the bank of the Nile. The Khalifa on the same day marched 60,000 warriors out of the city and camped them in the desert only five miles from Kitchener.

Rarely have two armies aggregating 80,000 combatants approached so near to one another without a preliminary skirmish or even an affair of outposts. Rarely have two commanders been more certain of success than were both Kitchener and Abdullahi. And rarely have two forces been more imbued with the spirit of their respective chiefs or more willing to make such sacrifices as might be necessary to ensure victory. The Dervishes were determined to fight in the open and die for their religion and the glory of conquest. The Anglo-Egyptians were prepared to attack a huge city and sustain enormous losses during several days' street-fighting—in the cause of their duty and their patriotism. As between the motives animating these opponents the verdict of the reader will doubtless vary according to his temperament and inclinations, but the effect was to bring about a collision with the least possible delay. The choice of the battle ground lay with the Dervishes, and they deliberately selected a treeless plain. Their military system required a clear manœuvring area for concentrated masses of men, to enable the Emirs to see what they were doing and control their numerous retainers. They had decided in any case to attack and to keep on attacking regardless of loss till they won. They attributed their recent defeats at Firkeh, Abu Hamed and The Atbara to the defensive attitude they had assumed in those actions. On this occasion they meant to revret to the precedents of Hicks' disaster at Shekan, Baker's disaster at El-Teb, Gordon's death

at Khartoum and a number of minor affairs—such as McNeil's zariba near Suakim and the British square at Abu Klea, both of which had been pierced by rushes of spearmen. The Dervishes now possessed both riflemen and spearmen in greater quantities than ever. They would charge and charge again, as the Prophet Mohamed had done in all his most glorious and holy battles. Mahdism too should conquer on this the greatest day of its history, and the plains of Kerreri should witness the slaughter of the foe.

Midway between the armies in their respective bivouacs a high conical hill, named Surgham, rose out of the plain. It was occupied by our cavalry and a signal station, and offered a distant view of the Dervish host which was watched through glasses till night-fall.

The Dervish army left an impression of great power on the minds of those who beheld it marching across the desert towards its camp, and some of the squadrons saw it at very close quarters in the morning's reconnaissance. The enormous tract of country it filled, the rate at which it moved and the spirit with which it was animated caused thoughtful officers to doubt the issue. Had Kitchener sufficient force to beat off such numbers? How could we stand up to their rushes during the darkness of the night? Such questions arose involuntarily, as officers on Surgham Hill looked from the Dervish mass in its vast camp towards their own thin line, disposed in an irregular crescent round the village of Agaiga.* Its flanks rested on the bank of the Nile, and were a mile apart. The crescent, about two miles long, was held only by a double rank of infantry. Gunboats in mid-stream brought a cross fire to bear on both flanks, and every-

* See plan facing page 232.

where the field of fire was excellent by daylight. But by moonlight no man would see further than 200 yards beyond his rifle-barrel!

Thus the night of September 1, was an anxious one for British officers, though the one most concerned, Kitchener, showed no anxiety. He had taken the precaution of privately informing some villagers of Agaiga that he meant to attack the Dervish army at midnight. He then sent them out to the Khalifa's camp for news of the enemy—knowing full well they would faithfully report his own intention to the other side. Whether this ruse or the rooted aversion of the Emirs to night operations influenced the Khalifa it is impossible to know. He was himself inclined for a night attack. He called a council of war after sunset, and at this council the plans for next day were discussed and decided. The night attack was mooted and rejected. My own impression after carefully cross-examining one of the Baggara Emirs who was present (he was subsequently wounded and taken prisoner) is that the council of war was so numerously attended that little business could be done, and that the real decision rested with the Khalifa and Osman Azrak who together planned the attack. At any rate the hours of darkness passed without incident, and with daylight the Khalifa's best chance of victory vanished.

The Battle of Omdurman has been described by many pens. My own sketch shall therefore be brief, and designed rather to carry forward the narrative to the downfall of the Dervishes a year after the action than to add any new light to what is known of the battle-tactics and incidents of September 2, 1898. The Dervishes were on the move long before daylight, mars alling their men in careful array, and when the sun rose about 5.50 A.M. an Egyptian squadron posted

betimes on Surgham Hill beheld a stirring sight. In five great subdivisions, all beautifully aligned and occupying fully four miles of frontage, the brave Arabs and blacks were striding into action at a prodigious pace. The ranks were ten, twenty and sometimes thirty deep. One of the masses followed in rear as a reserve, marching straight towards Surgham Hill from which the nearest body was but one mile distant. The contingent of each great Emir was clearly denoted by his flag borne aloft on a pole or spear, and the enthusiasm of the whole force was sufficiently evinced by the unhesitating way in which it moved, and by the shouts and roars of tens of thousands of men calling upon Allah to grant them victory. Long before our troops could see a man or even a flag on the horizon the distant murmur of raucous voices gave them some idea of the vast numbers they were about to engage.

The Dervish plan of attack was simple, comprehensive and suitable to the ground they had selected and the discipline they could enforce. But it completely miscalculated the effect of fire-arms on an open plain. The idea was to envelop the Sirdar's position and attack it from three directions whilst a central reserve of 20,000 picked men, concealed behind Surgham Hill, waited till one of the attacks should succeed. It was then to rush forward and complete the victory. The five contingents were marshalled as under, from left to right, but the figures should be accepted as only approximately correct:

(1) Ali Wad Helu's Bright Green Flag	6,000	men.
(2) Sheik-el-Din's (son of the Khalifa) Dark Green Flag.	12,000	,,
(3) Yakoob's (brother of the Khalifa) Great Black Flag .	20,000	,,
(4) Osman Azrak's various Flags of Subordinate Emirs .	15,000	,,
(5) Sherif's Red Flag	7,000	,,
Total .	60,000	,,

The Khalifa himself remained with Yakoob and the Krupp artillery near the Great Black Flag which was his own special ensign. The first two contingents were to make for the Kerreri Hills, move behind their cover, turn to the right and attack the northern face of Kitchener's crescent. The third contingent was to remain in reserve as stated above. The fourth under its celebrated fighting chief was to make a frontal attack across the level ground between Surgham and Kerreri Hills. The fifth was to climb over the Surgham ridges and attack our southern flank simultaneously with Osman Azrak. Osman Digna with several hundred Hadendoa Arabs from Suakin was to lie in wait near the Omdurman road and fall upon any detachments which might try to get into the city. Beyond the combination arranged between Osman Azrak and Sherif we have no reason to believe that the several attacks were intended to be simultaneous. The evidence rather points to the probability that each Emir was to emulate the zeal of his neighbour and try to be first into the invaders' ranks.

Whilst the Dervishes are still marching to their allotted places let us glance at the map facing page 232 and notice Kitchener's dispositions to meet the impending attack. He remained in the formation he had selected when a night attack seemed probable and relied wholly on fire action to win the battle. He therefore put as many rifles as possible in the firing line, keeping only two companies per battalion in support and one (Collinson's) brigade in reserve. Roughly speaking the larger half of the crescent, which faced Surgham Hill and the space between it and Kerreri Hills, was manned by the British Division and Maxwell's brigade. This was the part which Osman Azrak and Sherif were about to attack. The lesser half

of the crescent, facing the Kerreri Hills and ridges, was manned by MacDonald's and Lewis's brigades, which were not attacked in the early morning. Batteries of artillery were posted in the intervals between brigades, maxims between battalions. Hunter had arranged that his brigades should fire from a slight shelter trench with no zariba in front, because a zariba would merely impede the field of fire without affording any protection against the enemy's bullets. But Gatacre's British brigades laboriously collected branches and trees for a zariba and omitted to dig a shelter trench. The consequence was that, when the attack developed, the British soldier had to stand up to shoot, as otherwise he could not see to fire over his zariba, and he thus laboured under the double disadvantage of being fully exposed to bullets and of firing from an awkward standing instead of an easy kneeling position. It was a drawback from which Hunter's command was free.

The 21st Lancers and Hospitals remained within the lines under cover of the Nile bank whilst the attack was in progress. The Egyptian cavalry, Camel-corps and Horse Battery were posted on Kerreri Hills under Broadwood, where they were destined to take an important part. The Howitzer Battery and 40-pounders were several miles up the river and had already inflicted considerable damage on the Mahdi's tomb, the forts and the walls, from the right bank of the Nile.

A flotilla of gunboats was engaged in reducing the river-forts of Omdurman, the other flotilla stood by with steam up to join in the general action at Agaiga, whenever opportunity should offer.

Thus all the pieces were set out upon the board and it will be easy to follow their play and see how each contributed to the day's fighting. At 6.15 A.M. the

murmur of beating drums and war-cries grew very loud, the tramp of Dervish feet was continuous, but as yet from Agaiga we could only see cavalry scouts retiring before the enemy across our front. Presently a line of flags appeared like a crested wave on the horizon a mile and a half in front of Maxwell's brigade. Then a wave of linen-clad men emerged from under the flags and drove towards us straight across the plain. It was Osman Azrak's frontal attack. Behind and beyond him similar waves of Green Flags dashed towards the Kerreri Hills, whilst on his right the Red Flag of Sherif topped Surgham ridge and descended swiftly into the arena. Within half an hour of their first appearance, Maxwell's brigade was hotly engaged with Osman Azrak, Gatacre's Division with Sherif, Broadwood's troops with Sheik-el-Din and the artillery and maxims with all of them. The Khalifa opened the battle with his Krupp guns, whose shells fell close to our line.

If bravery and sublime indifference to death could have carried men over the bullet-swept zone, Osman Azrak and Sherif would certainly have closed with Maxwell and Gatacre. But the thing was utterly impossible. No human being could run and live in the storm of lead which swept over the ground. Shrapnel burst amidst the more distant masses with perpetual accuracy: maxim and rifle bullets tore through the flesh and bones of those who came nearer. The Dervish ranks nevertheless hurried unflinchingly forward in their magnificent and sullen determination to grapple with the foe. But the attack in broad daylight could have only one termination, though some Dervishes survived to reach within a couple of hundred paces of our position and some of their riflemen, concealed by hollows and depressions in the plain, kept

up a galling fire which killed more men in our reserves than in our firing line. By 8.15 A.M. after an hour and a half of struggle the attack died away from sheer exhaustion and loss, and two of the enemy's five contingents were completely *hors de combat*. Meanwhile the British and Egyptians had suffered casualties, though they passed unnoticed during the absorbing interest of the engagement and amounted to a mere nothing when compared with Osman Azrak's and Sherif's 2113 killed and about 6000 wounded. These lay strewn over an area of a square mile, and so fierce is the fighting instinct of the Mohammedan warrior that he will rise wounded from the ground and expend his last breath in using his rifle or spear against any enemy who passes negligently near him.

We had not wished to mow them down as they advanced, nor had any one relished the process of perpetually loading and pressing the trigger of a very hot rifle, but there was no other method of dealing with Dervishes and preventing the far greater slaughter which would have occurred, had they penetrated our formation.

Simultaneously with the events just narrated our mounted force in observation on Kerreri heights became seriously compromised with Sheik-el-Din's contingent, and the action which ensued was to have a direct bearing on the principal incident of the day. Broadwood's *rôle* was to observe and co-operate and feint. He had no intention of undertaking a separate battle on his own account, nor was his force organised for close fighting in the hills. It numbered 1800 men, trained to fight on foot and move on horseback or camel-back, and was composed of nine squadrons of cavalry, one battery of horse artillery and eight companies of camel-corps. The Kerreri slopes were everywhere

strewn with rocks and volcanic boulders, whereas the level plain around them had become a marsh owing to recent heavy rain. On such ground the military mobility of Broadwood's three arms may be compared with that of a hunter, a hansom-cab and a milch-cow. The desert-bred camel floundered hopelessly in the marsh or stumbled painfully over boulders : the gun wheels were in frequent difficulties : the cavalry alone could be depended on to move quickly.

When Sheik-el-Din's thousands surged rapidly upon them, Broadwood's men were posted on foot along some ridges with their animals well in rear. Their commander had but a moment in which to come to a decision, and a moment was sufficient. He ordered the men to retire and mount. They as usual supported one another by a covering fire and, working with deliberation, sought to check the tide of the enemy's attack. Having regained their mounts the retirement continued. This unequal combat was observed from Agaiga with some apprehension, and the batteries which could bear on Kerreri Hills diverted their fire from Osman Azrak and burst shells amongst Sheik-el-Din's men at 3000 yards. The Sirdar thought it would be prudent to withdraw the cavalry within the main lines, but Broadwood sent him a message that he was too closely engaged to withdraw to his flank and proposed to continue retiring due north till he could shake off his pursuers.

But the pursuing footmen were now leaping over the boulders quicker than the camels, so Broadwood decided that he must at any rate free himself from the incubus of his slow-moving camel-corps, and accordingly ordered it to make for the Nile whilst he covered the movement from a flank. In order to extricate the camel-corps and get it safely within our lines, he was

prepared to make a desperate charge with all his squadrons. Encumbered with forty wounded, the camels made towards the river with Sheik-el-Din's leading men in hot pursuit and only 300 yards distant. It looked as though they must be completely overwhelmed. But at this critical moment one of the gunboats swung down-stream and at short ranges plastered the Kerreri hill-sides with shrapnel and maxim bullets, checked the Dervish pursuit, obviated Broadwood's charge and enabled the camel-corps to gain the safety of our lines. The infuriated Dervishes baulked of their prey turned upon Broadwood with renewed vigour and pursued his elusive squadrons three miles down the river bank. Their appetite was whetted by the capture of two of the horse artillery guns, which stuck in a bog and had to be abandoned; but meanwhile Sheik-el-Din was led four miles away from the battlefield during the most critical hours of the day. Broadwood's squadrons, handled as he and his bimbashis knew how to handle them, merely played with the angry Dervishes and ended by slipping back along the river bank under the covering fire of a gunboat. They recovered their lost guns and rejoined the army soon after 10 A.M. Sheik-el-Din also rallied and marched back his scattered command, but by the time it rejoined Ali Wad Helu's contingent the moment for its most effective action had passed, as we shall relate by-and-bye. Thus ended the first phase of the battle.

We have, however, anticipated the main narrative by two hours in order to follow Broadwood's manœuvre to its conclusion, and must now return to Kitchener at Agaiga after the frontal attack was repulsed at 8.15 A.M. The Sirdar, having annihilated two contingents and seen a third quit the battlefield in pursuit of his

cavalry, determined forthwith to reach the city before the two remaining contingents could get there to organise street fighting. He therefore marched out of Agaiga and headed for Omdurman, moving in *échelon* of brigades from the left (river flank) in the following order—2nd (Lyttelton's) British Brigade, 1st (Wauchope's) British Brigade, Maxwell's Brigade, Lewis's Brigade, MacDonald's Brigade. Collinson's Brigade followed along the river bank as a reserve, to protect the hospitals and transport. As MacDonald's was the most exposed brigade in this movement, it was reinforced by three batteries artillery and six maxim guns.

To interpose your own army between the enemy and his base is one of the soundest and oldest of the maxims of good generalship. It has been applied in all ages and in all campaigns whether by sea or by land, and requires, to avoid defeat, that the force which attempts it be sufficiently strong to maintain itself against counter-attack. But the manœuvre is by no means an easy one to execute on the field of battle. In the Boer War we accomplished it successfully at Paardeberg, but failed to do so at Poplar Grove, Driefontein, Johannesberg, Pretoria and Diamond Hill. The Japanese, though successful in every engagement, failed to interpose between the Russians and their base at Liau-Yang and Mukden. Even Baron Stackelberg, when soundly beaten at Telissu, was able to rejoin Kuropatkin's army. The more we study military history the more we are impressed with the fact that to gain a really decisive action a general must successfully interpose between his opponent and his opponent's base, and that is why every ambitious commander has attempted to do it. At any rate those who feared the risk which such a manœuvre involves have not

won the victory which perhaps their tactical successes have deserved. Therefore, when Kitchener headed for Omdurman with two unbeaten contingents of Dervishes hovering still on his flank, he was merely taking the road which would lead to the most decisive result—confident, after the experiences of the morning, that he could beat off the enemy's attacks. The sequel justified his opinion and refuted that of the critics, who perhaps forgot what has been proved a thousand times over—the impossibility of bringing off a victory without running some risk.

Thus at the commencement of the second phase of the battle we find Kitchener's army marching southwards by brigades, separated from one another by very wide gaps, with the 21st Lancers acting as advanced guard. The Khalifa and his reserve still lay behind Surgham Hill. Ali Wad Helu remained concealed by the Kerreri heights. Sheik-el-Din was pursuing the Egyptian cavalry. The time was about 8.40 A.M.

It was at this interesting climax that there occurred an episode which, owing to the praise bestowed upon it by public opinion at home, proves beyond doubt that England is the paradise of amateurs. I refer to the charge of the 21st Lancers. The regiment had never before been in action and every one sympathised with its ardent desire to achieve a success. After passing between Surgham Hill and the Nile it encountered various small parties of the retreating enemy, for by now a steady stream of fugitives from the beaten contingents were making for their homes in the city. But unfortunately for the Lancers there was also an ambush in a *khor*, into which the regiment deliberately galloped. They suffered heavy losses without inflicting much damage, and then retired out of action. Such misfortunes are not uncommon in war, but this one was magnified by

irresponsible writers into an Homeric Feat of Arms, which serious soldiers sincerely deplore. The Lancers' charge was not only unnecessary, but had the greater disadvantage of incapacitating the regiment from the performance of the particular duty it was brought into the Sudan to accomplish—namely the capture of the Khalifa—and the fact that both officers and men behaved with great gallantry in a nasty place is no excuse for a blunder.

Whilst this episode was taking place and the Sirdar was leading the British brigades in the wake of the Lancers, MacDonald's brigade took ground to the right between Kerreri and Surgham Hills, passing over the plain on which Osman Azrak's attack had been shattered. Vandeleur in the 9th Sudanese, belonged to this brigade, and my narrative of what befell it is derived from his diary and letters, which were written immediately after the event and furnish a clear and unvarnished account of what happened. Fortunately the men were fresh, as they were not in action during the first phase of the battle; the brigadier, MacDonald, was a fine fighting soldier who knew how to train and command a brigade, and Hunter, his immediate superior, had cautiously strengthened him by the addition of all the artillery and maxims he could spare from his other brigades. Some delay had necessarily occurred before MacDonald could start to take his allotted place in the *échelon*, and the result was a considerable gap between him and Lewis, as well as between Lewis and Maxwell. Moreover, these gaps tended to increase as the foot of Surgham Hill was neared.

When MacDonald approached to within 1200 yards of its western slope, he became aware that he was in for a stiff fight with the Khalifa's reserve

under the Black Flag, and Hunter accordingly sent a galloper to Kitchener with the news. Soon afterwards fighting was renewed along the whole "refused" flank from Kerreri hills to beyond Surgham, a distance of four miles, and the march on Omdurman was abruptly postponed. Wauchope started on a two-mile tramp back towards MacDonald, Lyttelton wheeled to the right south of Surgham slopes, Maxwell wheeled and stormed Surgham heights, Lewis became engaged between Maxwell and MacDonald, and firing was reopened by the Dervishes all along the line. Each brigade had a story of its own but our particular interest in Vandeleur engages us to follow the fortunes of MacDonald's men, who bore the brunt of two such furious attacks as have rarely been repelled in quick succession by a single brigade. When he saw the first onset impending from behind Surgham Hill, the brigadier halted and made preparation. He deployed the 9th Sudanese on the right, the 11th Sudanese on the left, the 10th Sudanese in the centre—all facing the Khalifa's Black Flag—and held the 2nd Battalion in reserve, closed up in quarter-column ready to prolong or strengthen the line as required. The three batteries and eight maxims were disposed in the intervals between the deployed battalions. Just as these arrangements were completed the Baggara horse charged down at top speed, followed by solid phalanxes of riflemen and spearmen on foot. It was the pick of the Dervish army making its effort to retrieve the disaster of the early morning, and might fittingly be compared to the last charge of Napoleon's Guard at Waterloo. The Emirs rode their horses with desperate energy and reminded Vandeleur of jockeys finishing for the Derby. Not one flinched or turned tail when met by the storm of bullets which emptied

many saddles. On they came, and single horsemen almost penetrated the line, being killed a few paces from it. Covered by this desperate charge the body-guard (mulazamieh) strode forward with equal bravery and suffered even greater loss. Their deep ranks were mown down with frightful slaughter, especially at about 200 yards range, though individuals got within fifty paces and less. Vandeleur wrote: "What a revelation it was to see the Dervishes come on to certain death without the slightest hesitation. I never saw one man who had approached anywhere near turn back. If he could no longer advance he lay down and fired."

When 20,000 such warriors are eager to die in order that a remnant of them may close with 3000, it is merely a matter of time as to when the clash will occur, and then the smaller force will perish. But at this critical period Lewis and Maxwell appeared on the Dervish flank, and diverted the dense masses in rear from reinforcing the attack on MacDonald. They were compelled to turn against their new assailants, and thus the pressure on MacDonald was greatly relieved. The roar of guns, maxims and rifles became incessant all over and around Surgham Hill, and the Remington rifles of the Black Flags spluttered in increasing numbers as the Khalifa's reserve spread out.

The battle had lasted over four hours without many pauses, and was being more hotly contested than ever, when MacDonald was suddenly called upon to face another crisis. This time it menaced his right rear from the direction of the Kerreri hills.

The Green Flags of Ali Wad Helu and Sheik-el-Din —the latter only just returned from his exhausting and abortive pursuit of Broadwood—were descending upon the rear of the 9th Sudanese whilst the battalion

still confronted the Black Flags. It was a question of minutes and drill, and the minutes were at the disposal of one man—MacDonald. If he misused them his brigade would be swept away, Lewis's would follow a few moments later, Collinson's too must be wiped out—together with hospitals, transport and reserve ammunition. Wauchope was moving to the scene of action at the double but could scarcely have saved the situation if MacDonald's brigade had been overwhelmed. Thus Mahdiism's last and only remaining chance depended on MacDonald's making a mistake, and he made none. He saw what was coming, knew exactly what to do and did it. It was a matter of drill under high pressure, and he had been drilling his brigade under all circumstances during several years. He had risen from private soldier to the command of a brigade and was now to justify his promotion. With calm precision he issued his orders, and in a few moments all his battalions, batteries and maxims were extricating themselves from their engagement with the Black Flags and threading their way at the double by the shortest route into a new alignment facing the Green Flags. The change of front had barely been executed when the Baggara horse came charging home, followed by solid masses of riflemen and spearmen, just as the Black Flags had done before. Only this time there was only the cavalry and camel-corps to come in on their flank. Vandeleur writing home within a week of the event said: "The 9th, which was the first battalion to form up on the new front, had just got into position when down came another charge of horse, almost a better one than the last, followed by the attack of the foot-men. Laurie's battery on our left soon exhausted its ammunition, but there were maxims on our right and the noise was tremendous. If the Green Flags had

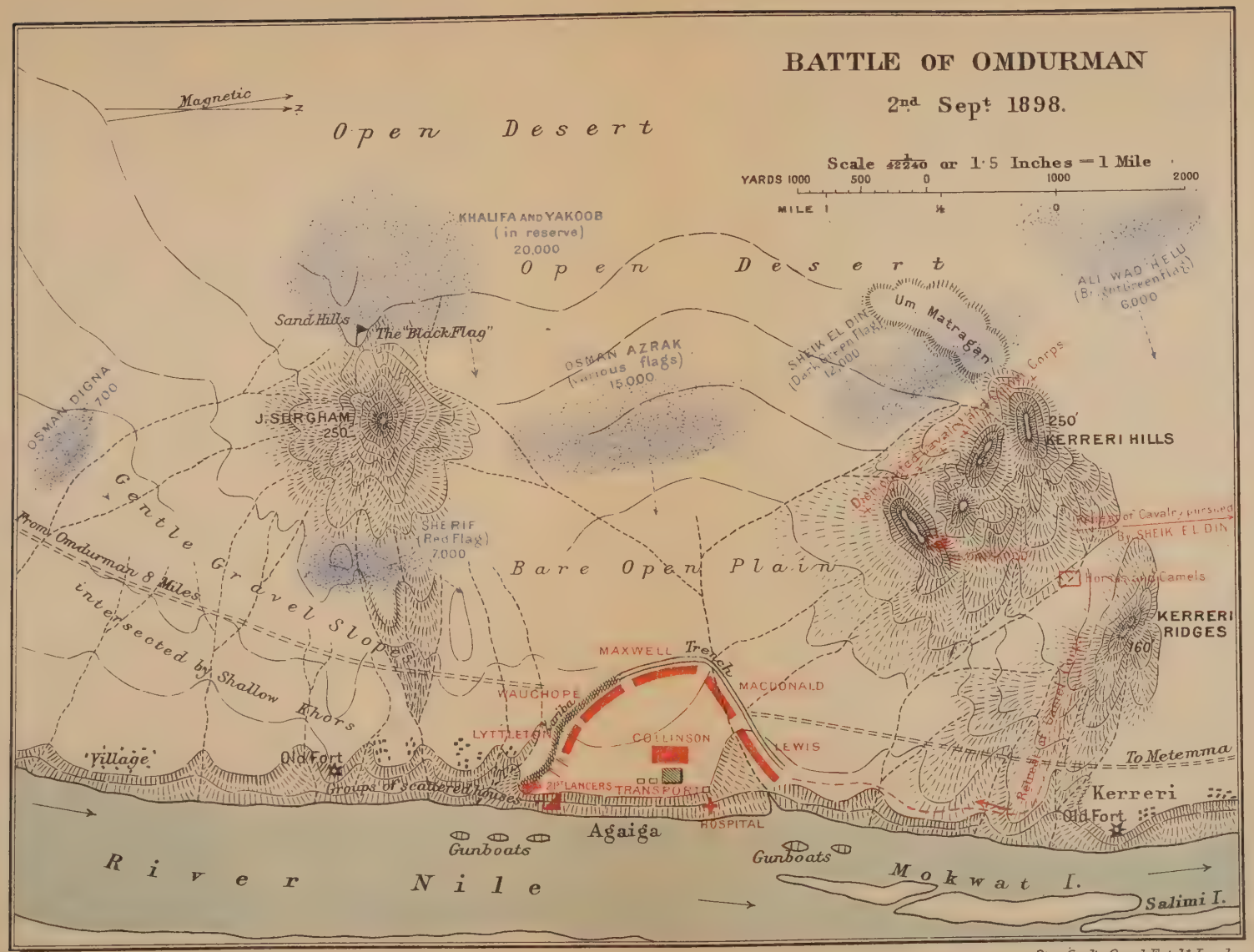
co-operated with the former attack and caught us in rear when we were engaged in front, it would have been extremely unpleasant. But the earlier attack had exhausted itself before the second came on, so we beat them in detail. The 1st British Brigade (Wauchope's) could be seen hurrying to support us, but the Dervish attack was done for before they came up. The thing was over and the *cease fire* sounded, so I rode out in front of my men to stop the shooting—when a Baggara spearman lying down unhurt about sixty paces from us made for me. He ran at a great pace and my horse being nervous interfered with my aim. His first spear whizzed past my head. I hit him with two revolver bullets but still he closed with me. I then warded off his spear thrust with my right hand and revolver, and he fell dead—finished off by one of the men's bullets. But in doing it his spear wounded me in the hand cutting the third finger and palm. Smyth* (who had a similar experience) and I both agree that the new *man-stopping* bullet is not much use against a good Dervish."

Vandeleur's simple narrative of what he saw and what befell him is more graphic than some of the word-pictures which have since been printed and it shows how hotly his battalion and brigade were engaged. The 9th Sudanese had 48 killed and wounded by Dervish rifle-fire, and the brigade including the artillery attached to it totalled 151 casualties in about three-quarters of an hour. Vandeleur's wound was happily a slight one, and he was able to stay on his horse and command his men.

Thus ended the second phase of the battle.

Before resuming his march to Omdurman, Kit-

* Bimbashi Smyth was awarded the Victoria Cross for this exploit. He saved the life of a correspondent who was similarly pursued by an Arab. Smyth received a spear wound in the arm the same day as Vandeleur.



REFERENCE
British.....Red
Dervishes Blue

Stanford's Geogl Estabt London

chener moved three brigades in one long line westwards into the desert and drove before him, with considerable losses, all formed bodies of Dervishes who still showed an inclination to fight, and it was amazing to realise how much punishment they required before they would acknowledge defeat. At last the weary troops turned from the field of slaughter, marched to Khor Shambat—which is an overflow from the Nile just outside the city—and halted to rest and eat biscuits and drink some much-needed water. The heat was intense and very little shade was obtainable between 1 P.M. and 5 P.M., when the bulk of the army marched into Omdurman—which had meanwhile been captured by Maxwell's brigade.

This event which coincided with the pursuit of the Dervishes by the Egyptian cavalry for thirty miles south of the city, constituted the third and last phase of the day's operations.

When the Khalifa Abdullahi saw that his attacks had failed, that his brother Yacoob and thousands of his best troops were killed, that his son Sheik-el-Din was carried wounded from the field, and that the 13th Sudanese were descending upon him from the top of Surgham Hill, he mounted his horse and rode swiftly to the city to organise its defence with the remnant of his army. For the last time his great war-drums and *ombeya* of elephant tusk resounded from the top of the arsenal and boomed forth their dismal message to assemble the faithful. We heard them at Khor Shambat three miles away and knew what they meant. For the last time the Khalifa ascended the pulpit of the mosque to encourage his bodyguard and exhort them to defend their homes and his. But those who were present and unwounded heeded him no longer. Their enthusiasm was dead.

At 2.10 P.M. Maxwell's brigade and the 32nd Field Battery paraded at Khor Shambat and marched into the city to reduce it to obedience. The start was so quietly managed and the army was so tired that the brigade got off without being noticed and was accompanied by no war correspondent but the Hon. Hubert Howard. As he was to be most unfortunately shot in the evening no account by an eye-witness of the fall of the city has appeared, though several erroneous statements have been printed. The Sirdar and his staff—notably Slatin revisiting the scene of his bondage—accompanied Maxwell and the Great Black Flag, borne aloft by a mounted orderly, followed Kitchener wherever he rode—a sign to the civil population that the Khalifa was conquered. The 14th Sudanese acted as escort to the Sirdar and the guns, whilst the three remaining battalions moved on a wide front clearing the side streets and guarding against ambuscades. Every armed man met with was ordered to throw down his weapon in the street. If he obeyed he was let off, if he disobeyed he was shot, and the news that the conquerors meant neither to sack the city nor massacre its inhabitants soon produced stacks of rifles and spears in the streets we occupied. The main thoroughfare by which the Sirdar entered was fifty yards wide and was thronged by an immense population, mostly women. It led straight to the corner of a massive masonry wall surrounding the heart of the town and containing the Mahdi's tomb, Khalifa's house, treasury, arsenal and many other substantial buildings—around which were the soldiers' quarters occupying an area of fully one square mile. Within this walled enclosure were also immense stores of grain and solid well-constructed armouries, in which the precious Remington rifles and cartridges were kept under lock and key except

when temporarily issued for fighting or drill. The twenty-foot wall had been erected since Slatin's escape, and he was therefore unable to guide us into the interior; in fact, besides some gates on the river face protected by forts, there were only two entrances to the great enclosure which was practically a prison. It was therefore decided that the 13th Sudanese should make their way down to the Nile and break in under cover of the gunboats, whilst the remainder of the brigade held all the streets leading from the mosque and thus protected the flank and rear from surprise.

Accordingly the 13th—commanded by Smith-Dorrien—marched to the river, took the forts in reverse and, after skirting the great wall for a couple of miles, discovered a massive wooden gate which was barred. They heard voices within, and a half company was drawn up ready to shoot, whilst the gate was being smashed open with a beam. It was all very interesting and very exciting for those who took a share in the adventure, for no one could guess what might occur at any moment. At last half the gate was forced open, we squeezed into the enclosure and beheld numbers of the Khalifa's riflemen bolting up the streets and alleys. Only one body of Dervishes and some stray individuals showed signs of fight and were promptly shot. The majority had had enough of slaughter, like ourselves, and threw down their arms when ordered. At first slowly, then quicker and quicker, the piles of Remingtons and bandoliers grew in the street—till they amounted to thousands, guarded by a few sentries. Undoubtedly our air of confident assurance and habit of commanding blacks imposed on the enemy and prevented them from realising that only one battalion and some guns had entered the enclosure.

A broad thoroughfare led straight to the Mahdi's tomb, less than a mile from the gate we had forced, and all around covering an immense area of ground was a squalid medley of diminutive hovels, houses and alleys—the home of the 10,000 picked Sudanese who had formed the Khalifa's bodyguard. Above the roofs appeared the two-storied abodes of the Emirs and, framing the picture, the solid masonry wall which forbade ingress or egress to the inhabitants.

Our objective was the Mahdi's tomb, a fine structure whose dome had been shattered by the third shot of the howitzer battery, at a range of two miles from across the river. The battalion advanced cautiously towards it, dropping sentries at the side streets, for experience had taught its officers to be alert and leave nothing to chance. Around the tomb and other public buildings unexploded howitzer shells were lying about in the streets, where they remained a serious danger until removed and sunk in mid-Nile. Near the tomb were the Khalifa's house and the great Mosque Square where a miserable sight met our gaze—hundreds of wounded Arabs and blacks sitting or lying, quite impassive beneath some shade, attended by their wives who brought them water. They informed us that the Khalifa had just left the Mosque to go into his house, adjoining it. The 13th, having been so near him at Surgham, were desperately keen to catch Abdullahi and hurried at once to his door. It was bolted and had to be broken open. A labyrinth of courtyards, passages and doors puzzled our blacks who failed to find him in the front rooms, but a turning to the right led into the Mosque Square whence an open gateway gave access to the back. Quickly we took this line and were provided with a dramatic incident which, at sunset, terminated an eventful day.

A low wall surrounded the Mosque Square into which the faithful flocked daily for prayer through several wide entrances—one of which was near the back door of the Khalifa's house. When we approached this entrance from the mosque side, six horsemen were observed galloping across it from behind the Khalifa's house, and their long spears remained visible just above the wall as they rode on. They saw us making for the entrance and only thirty yards from it, whereupon two of their number stopped and waited behind the wall. One dismounted and could no longer be seen, the other sat on his horse and poised his spear above his head—ready for action. Their four companions galloped away as fast as they could. Evidently something was up, so a section of the leading company of the 13th Sudanese was drawn across the entrance with bayonets fixed and rifles loaded. A pause ensued, during which we all watched the spear poised above the wall in the Baggara's hand. Then suddenly like a flash of lightning the two desperate men charged home, one on foot the other mounted. The man on foot threw one spear before he started from behind the wall, then closed with another in his hand and wounded one of our blacks. The horsemen made good his point and transfixed a Sudanese corporal through the skull with his spear, pinning him against the mosque wall and instantly killing him. Both the Baggaras then fell dead at the feet of our men riddled with bullets, as was also the horse.

It was a gallant act gallantly performed in order to gain a few moments time for the Khalifa to escape us. He was one of the four horsemen we had seen, and the sacrifice of their lives which his two men so willingly made delayed us just enough to prevent our shooting at Abdullahi as he rode down the street. Then

suddenly the battalion and staff assembled round the Khalifa's house felt shells bursting above their heads and shrapnel bullets whizzing about them. These were most accurately aimed and very unpleasant. Obviously we had come under the fire of the two British guns which had been posted outside the great enclosure, and our musketry had attracted their attention. They knew not that they were shooting at their friends. Hunter at once ordered the Khalifa's house to be evacuated, but most unfortunately Mr. Hubert Howard —the *Times* correspondent—was struck in the head by a shrapnel bullet and killed on the spot. It was a cruel end to a brilliant young life, to be thus sacrificed at the close of the battle. The Sirdar and all those present ran a similar risk, but it would be foolish to impute blame to the staff or the gunners who had no means of knowing that the Khalifa's house was already in our possession. Such accidents are unavoidable in war, and must be risked if artillery is to effectually support infantry assaults.

EGYPTIAN SUDAN Nº 1

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER YEAR IN THE SUDAN

See map facing page 252

On Friday September 2, 1898 the Dervish army was shattered and dispersed as narrated in the last chapter; on Saturday an Egyptian brigade took charge of the city of about 250,000 inhabitants; on Sunday at Khartoum a touching religious service was held in memory of Gordon on the ruins of his palace, over which the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted with due ceremony; on Monday some semblance of law and order was established in Omdurman; on Tuesday the British troops began their return journey to Cairo and England; on Wednesday a Dervish steamer arrived from Fashoda with its old paddle-boxes riddled by the French bullets of Major Marchand's Mission; and on Thursday the Sirdar steamed up the White Nile with a flotilla of gunboats and a sufficient military force to overpower the intruders, if necessary.

As Vandeleur did not accompany Kitchener during the episode known as the Fashoda Incident, we need only remark that it was settled to the satisfaction of both England and France, and that Major Marchand was cordially entertained by every British officer whom he met at Omdurman, Cairo and lastly at Fort Nasser—our furthest post up the river Sobat—on his road to France through Abyssinia. All who had the pleasure

of meeting him were most favourably impressed by the personality of this enterprising French officer.

Meanwhile, although the Khalifa's adherents had fled from the stricken field, his garrisons in outlying provinces refused to disperse and had to be separately dealt with. The great rivers soon came under our control and military posts were quickly established in the chief riparian towns, but in the interior the well-disposed populations were perpetually harassed, raided and looted of their grain, flocks and herds. In fact the battle of Omdurman marked the beginning of a period of fifteen months' hard work by the Egyptian army. So long as the Khalifa remained at large, this remarkable man—notwithstanding his crushing defeat—maintained a firm hold on all the turbulent elements in the land and rendered any peaceful settlement impossible. He attracted to his standard the leading Arabs with their numerous retainers, who, after fourteen years of undisputed sway, were naturally averse to submitting to the new *régime*.

The first and most formidable of these was his cousin, Ahmed Fedil, who commanded 8000 well-disciplined men at Gedaref and on the Blue Nile. To him General Hunter, left in supreme command during Kitchener's absence at Fashoda, sent two emissaries to announce the destruction of the Omdurman army and the fall of the city, at the same time offering liberal terms to induce the Dervishes to disarm and disperse. But Ahmed Fedil only flew into a rage, declared to his followers that Omdurman still held out, shot one of the messengers, flogged the other, and sent him back to tell Hunter that he meant to fight it out to the bitter end. And he kept his word for fourteen weary months. Hunter saw that he had better deal with him before the Blue Nile should subside to unnavigable dimensions, and

accordingly organised river reconnaissances and military garrisons all the way from Omdurman to Rosaires—400 miles distant.

Thus, Vandeleur in command of eighty selected men of his battalion was again on the warpath, even before his wound was healed—as he started within ten days of receiving the injury with a splint still on his finger, and proceeded to Abu Haraz, 140 miles up the Blue Nile.*

Hunter's object was to prevent Ahmed Fedil from crossing the river from east to west without a decisive engagement. The latter's object was to effect a crossing, march to the White Nile, cross it also, and so join forces with the Khalifa in Kordofan. But the passage of a wide and deep river patrolled by vigilant gunboats was more than he could accomplish, so after several futile attempts he retired inland towards Gedaref, the principal town of his district, to await the fall of the flood-water and the consequent disappearance of the pestilent gunboats.

The distance between Abu Haraz and Rosaires, the extreme limit of navigation, was no less than 260 miles by river; and Ahmed Fedil who knew the country well dodged from place to place collecting his food from the unfortunate inhabitants, who fled for protection to our military posts and gunboats. These were kept perpetually on the alert in expectation of an attempt at crossing at one spot or another, and Vandeleur and his gunboat were very busy between Abu Haraz, Wad Medina and Sennar. The eastern bank of the Blue Nile and the country behind it were densely clothed in tropical vegetation, almost impossible to operate in with success. In fact the campaign seemed as if it might drag on for an indefinite time without decisive

* See map facing page 252.

result, whilst the peoples of several rich provinces bordering the tributaries of the Blue Nile and Atbara were unable to gather the harvest, now almost ripe. Fortunately, however, Ahmed Fedil could be attacked in rear as well as held in front and the period of uncertainty was greatly reduced by two brilliant little actions, which reflected more credit on the Egyptian army than has yet been recognised. I refer to the battles at Gedaref on September 22, and near Rosaires on December 26, 1898. Their merit has not yet been fully appreciated even by the small public which interests itself in such matters.

It will be within the recollection of the reader that Kassala was handed over by the Italians to the Egyptian army on Christmas Day, 1897, and had since been held strictly on the defensive. The moment was now at hand for its garrison to act. As soon as authentic news arrived concerning the Battle of Omdurman, its commander Lieut.-Col. Parsons, who was well informed regarding Ahmed Fedil's movements, organised the following field force and started with it for Gedaref—

Half 16th Egyptian Battalion (Capt. McKerrel and Capt. Dwyer)	500	men.
Half an Arab Battalion (formerly Italian, now commanded by Capt. Wilkinson)	450	,,
Irregulars (Major Lawson)	350	,,
Sudanese Camel-Corps (Capt. Hon. A. Ruthven) . .	80	,,
Total . .	1,380	,,

This force had no artillery or maxims and only seven British officers, including the doctor, Captain Fleming, who greatly distinguished himself and was awarded the D.S.O.

Parsons' object was to capture Ahmed Fedil's base of supply whilst this chief was engaged with Hunter on the Blue Nile. The column accomplished the difficult

march of 107 miles to Gedaref in excellent style, crossing the flooded Atbara in boats of their own construction. On September 22, they arrived soon after sunrise within four miles of the town, but their approach was discovered, and the Emir Saadulla at the head of 3400 Dervishes, detached from Ahmed Fedil's mainbody, was ready to dispute their further progress. Parsons, reconnoitring in front of his marching column, beheld this body of men advancing in three lines straight for his force, and knew that a collision must occur within half an hour. He also noticed from the hill on which he stood that a mile to his right front a small ridge rose well above the plain and offered a favourable position if only he could get his men on it before the Dervishes. He therefore deflected their march to the right and ordered them to move at the double. In good order but breathless they gained the ridge before the enemy realised their object; but the transport camels and hospital lagged dangerously in rear and attracted the attention of a large body of Dervishes who detached themselves from the main force. Meanwhile the Arab Battalion and 16th Egyptians were lining the crest of the ridge, which the Dervish columns immediately attacked. They came boldly up in their usual way, some riflemen getting within 200 yards of the top. But the Egyptians, Arabs and Irregulars, standing in high grass on the ridge, poured out such a destructive fire that the attack held off, though our losses were numerous. Then, when the attacking line wavered and individual Dervishes even ran back, our line advanced upon them from the ridge and completed their dis comfiture.

But at this moment Parsons became aware that his transport, seeking cover behind the rising ground, was in danger of being overwhelmed by a Dervish attack

in his rear. He was between two fires; and the situation was critical. His only chance lay in launching the Arab Battalion boldly at the Dervishes in his front, whilst the steady 16th was brought back to the ridge, to shoot in the opposite direction. It turned about at once and did its duty splendidly. Already the enemy were right in amongst the camels, hamstringing and killing, when they received at 100 yards' range the appalling fire of the 16th Egyptians who treated them to continuous independent shooting. This settled the question. Both parties of Dervishes fled in confusion, pursued by our Arabs and Irregulars for a short distance. Our loss was 53 killed, 61 wounded and many camels gone. The Dervishes lost over 450 killed and wounded. There were several gallant deeds performed during the short sharp encounter, notably by Captain the Hon. A. Ruthven who was subsequently decorated with the Victoria Cross.

At 12 noon Gedaref surrendered together with Nur Angara—one of Gordon's old warriors—two guns and 200 blacks, who took service with the victors. The place was at once put into a proper state of defence, as the Dervishes, encamped within a few miles, might probably attack and would certainly cut off convoys from Kassala. Within a week they did attack in great strength, but the intervening days had been so well spent in clearing the ground and loopholing the walls of the largest houses that it was unlikely they should succeed against the troops who had so recently defeated them in the open. Their three attacks only resulted in a loss of over 500 to themselves. The garrison was cut off and practically besieged but no impression could be made on its defences. Being without artillery the captured Dervish guns were turned upon their late owners with satisfactory results, and from start to finish

the diminutive Kassala column proved a remarkable success. It would not, however, have been prudent to launch it against Ahmed Fedil in his chosen position, so General Rundle organised another column at Abu Haraz in which Vandeleur commanded a half-battalion of the 9th Sudanese. This column reached Gedaref on October 21, and on October 24, Ahmed Fedil and his army—much reduced in size—departed for the almost impenetrable forests through which flows the Dinder River. His progress was slow, and he made frequent halts to enable him to raid the neighbourhood for grain and cattle, as well as to patrol the Blue Nile and learn where he might cross it. But everywhere he found gunboats within hail, so at length he made up his mind to a long march south in order to cross above the Rosaires cataract and avoid them. Thus the game of hide-and-seek continued through December and only came to an abrupt end at the beginning of 1899.

For some time Lieut.-Col. Lewis had been patrolling with cavalry along the left bank of the river and had kept himself well posted as to Ahmed Fedil's movements. He therefore betook himself to Rosaires in anticipation of events and, when reports reached him that the Emir was actually crossing the river twenty miles to the south, he at once marched to attack him with the following force :

10th Sudanese (Lieut.-Col. Nason and Major Fergusson) .	510	men.
9th Sudanese (Capt. Sir H. Hill)	30	,,
Two maxims (Sergeants Lambert and Trowbridge). .	10	,,
Irregulars (Sheik Abu-Bakr)	400	,,
Medical Corps (Capt. Jennings)	4	,,
Total. .	954	,,

This was on Christmas Day, 1898. After a halt to sleep

in a village half-way, the march was resumed at 3 A.M. the following morning and continued till eight, along the eastern bank through a forest of thick-set bush. Then suddenly the advanced-guard encountered a Dervish outpost which it drove in : and the column debouched on the edge of the water, opposite a bare island of sand and shingle in the middle of the Blue Nile. On this island, a mile long and three-quarters of a mile wide, the Dervish camp and a large force were plainly visible. Beyond the island, the western bank of the river rose in a cliff forty feet high, on the summit of which Ahmed Fedil himself and several hundreds of his rifle-men were already posted. In fact Lewis had caught the Dervish force in the act of crossing ; their strength was divided between the island and the cliffs, and the deeper, broader and swifter arm of the river separated their two parties. They were, however, in much greater strength than he had been led to expect and the situation looked nasty. Of the two bodies, that on the island was clearly the stronger, and Lewis had to make up his mind how to deal with it.

If he did not attack quickly, the Dervishes certainly would either attack him or escape across the river to their friends, so with the bold instinct of a true soldier he made up his mind to attack at once. He realised the hazard but had no alternative, and, having counted the risk, he launched his little column against 3000 men. The brunt of the fighting which ensued fell upon that magnificent battalion the 10th Sudanese, and if any of my readers should still doubt the value of our Sudanese regulars, surely the action above the Rosaires cataract —400 miles from Khartoum—will convince them of their mistake.

On the further edge of the island, opposite the cliffs, a line of low sand-hills afforded the Dervishes a strong

position, with level shingle between themselves and Lewis. He therefore opened the fight with long-range volleys and maxims, which could by no means dislodge the enemy, but did elicit a hot rejoinder and so enabled him to mark the exact position they occupied. He then ordered the maxims to maintain their fire whilst he sent the Irregulars across by a ford, with instructions to attack from the south end of the island and hold the enemy in position till they could co-operate with the regulars. At the same time he crossed over with the 10th Sudanese by another ford, in order to reach the north end of the island and assault the enemy's flank.

When the 10th reached the place in full view of the cliffs they deployed rapidly into line and—with that mixture of dash and discipline which was the characteristic of the battalion—advanced across the open against the sand-hills. They immediately became the target of a furious musketry fire from both sand-hills and cliff, and nearly a quarter of their numbers lay strewn over the ground—killed or wounded. But the five companies led by their two British officers nevertheless charged forward, increasing their pace as they went till they reached the sheltering foot of the nearest sand-dunes, where they were ordered to pause and take breath. Thereupon the enemy, deceived by appearances, rose with a confident shout from behind knolls and hillocks, and, encouraged from the cliff by war-drums and yells of triumph, advanced against their hesitating foe to demolish him. But they had misunderstood the 10th Sudanese, who, in compliance with their officers' orders, quietly lined the tops of the sand-dunes and poured forth upon their attackers a continuous and deadly fire at short range. The effect was immediate. The Dervishes wavered, then broke and fled, pursued by our exulting blacks from sand-ridge

to sand-ridge. Some made for the river and attempted to swim it, others escaped to the south of the island and were attacked by the Irregulars. The 10th moving in one long irregular line swept over the ground, driving their adversaries before them over hillock and down dale, rolling up the Dervish line from end to end, till they held the survivors at their mercy on the south corner of the island—with a deep river running at seven miles an hour at their backs.

The action was over. By three o'clock 2100 Dervishes had surrendered to the victors, who had been marching and fighting for fully twelve hours. The losses of the 10th Sudanese included Major Fergusson wounded, 30 men killed and 117 wounded. The Irregulars had 40 casualties. The Dervish killed were computed at 600, besides those drowned in the river. Ahmed Fedil escaped with the party which had previously crossed the Blue Nile. He marched over to the White Nile at Renk where a gunboat met him. The majority of his force at once came in to tender their submission and were sent to Omdurman. But the Emir himself and his most trusted retainers managed to cross the river in the night, and made their way to the Khalifa in Kordofan—a broken band.

There we will leave them for the present. Peace at last reigned in the Blue Nile provinces, and the weary populations and soldiery enjoyed a period of rest and quiet.

Many details of interest have necessarily been omitted in the foregoing narrative, in order to concentrate attention upon active operations which led to definite results. But, although successful skirmishes and battles are more attractive topics than records of sickness and failure, it should not be supposed that soldiering in the Sudan was devoid of dull months and

keen disappointments to individual officers. Whilst a few were taking part in the actions at Gedaref and Rosaires the majority were coping with an epidemic of fever on the Blue Nile which seriously incapacitated the force. I find in Vandeleur's diary a copy of the daily sick report for the garrison of Karkoj on November 21 which states that 343 were in hospital out of a total of 408 men in the place. It is not therefore surprising that, after Ahmed Fedil had been dealt with and the Khalifa's Kordofan gathering had been reconnoitred by Colonel Kitchener, the Sirdar (now Lord Kitchener of Khartoum) deemed it wise to grant the Egyptian army a period of rest in comfortable quarters, after their harassing campaign.

Leaving small but sufficient garrisons at Fort Nasser, Sobat, Fashoda, Rosaires, Sennar, Kassala and a few other places, he withdrew the scattered army and concentrated it at or near Omdurman for recuperation and training. Meanwhile a liberal Gazette of Honours and Rewards, of which the Egyptian army obtained a full and well-merited share, showed that England appreciated the work of her sons on the Nile. Lieutenant Vandeleur received an honourable "mention in official despatches" and was decorated with the Order of the Medjidie. Subsequently he was promoted captain in the Scots Guards and Brevet Major in the Army, the latter as a recognition of his services in Nigeria. He thus obtained Field rank before the age of thirty.

Early in 1899, Kitchener selected him for the appointment of Inspector in the soldier-civilian service which was destined to start the Sudan on its new career of regeneration and prosperity, and he commenced his task in March under Lieut.-Col. Mahon in the Khartoum province. There was an immense work

to be done and it could only be accomplished very gradually, for the populations, however friendly, were so inured to oppression that they could not believe in the possibility of what we call Justice. The first and most urgent step was to put a curb on flagrant cases of murder by individual ruffians, and to bring these malefactors to book in open court. Egyptian *mamours* were appointed to the various subdivisions of the province, police posts were arranged in the towns and villages, and it was the Inspector's duty to constantly visit all these, both on the White and Blue Niles, and to keep in touch by personal intercourse with whatever occurred within his jurisdiction. Vandeleur was in fact the outward and visible emblem of British civilisation to the inhabitants of the Khartoum province and had a steamer at his disposal for his necessary journeys.

But, as the months rolled by and our soldier-civilian officers came to identify their interests with those of the peoples whom they governed, it became more and more evident that the Khalifa, though still withdrawn into the province of Kordofan, was a serious hindrance to the progress of adjoining districts. Between Duem and Fashoda for a distance of 300 miles the left bank of the White Nile and its vast hinterland remained at the mercy of his followers, and Vandeleur's journal contained numerous entries concerning the raids and murders which came to his notice. The Khalifa's armed force—instead of diminishing as had been confidently hoped—increased with the lapse of time and immunity from attack. Far from being an outlaw, he was actually the ruler of the province from which he and his Baggara had sprung. Such a firebrand in the midst of emotional and warlike tribes could not be tolerated by a government which aspired to bring about the peaceful regeneration of the Sudan,

so in October 1899 the Sirdar organised a military expedition to deal with the nuisance.

At that time the Khalifa and his army—4000 fighting men—were located at Gebel Gedir in the hinterland of Fashoda, 100 miles from the Nile. The difficulty of getting at him was very great, chiefly owing to the arid nature of the belt of country between the river and his camp. For fifty miles the troops had to carry their water for the march, and it was impossible to conceal their departure from Abdullahi's spies, who swarmed between Omdurman and Fashoda. The attempt was worth making, but it failed. Two days before our cavalry reached Gebel Gedir the Khalifa and his whole force with women, children and baggage disappeared into the recesses of southern Kordofan. As it was no use pursuing this elusive army from camp to camp, and more definite results would be obtained by striking at the head than by following the tail, Lord Kitchener at once ordered the whole expedition to return to Omdurman and wait for another and a better opportunity. It was a great disappointment to the officers and men of the Egyptian army, and with sad hearts we returned to garrison duty on November 1, finding no consolation in the gloomy telegrams which reached us from the seat of war in Natal and Cape Colony.

But the Sudan is and always has been a land of surprises, and its people are unaccountably credulous. Rumours reached the bazaars of Omdurman that the Khalifa was coming to attack us, that his friends in the city were inciting the populace to rise against the soldiers, that arms (lying buried in the desert) would be available. That he intended to march 400 miles through Kordofan to attack the army from which he had just escaped at Gebel Gedir was more than we

could pretend to believe, but the bazaars believed it and the bazaars were right. He was preaching a holy war in the same country and at the corresponding date to that preached by the successful Mahdi. Did they not all recollect the glories of those Kordofan victories, which culminated in Hicks' disaster on November 5, 1883 ? Next we had definite news of him by telegraph. He had marched 200 miles north, his advanced-guard under Ahmed Fedil was encamped near Abba island and had actually fired at our gunboats.

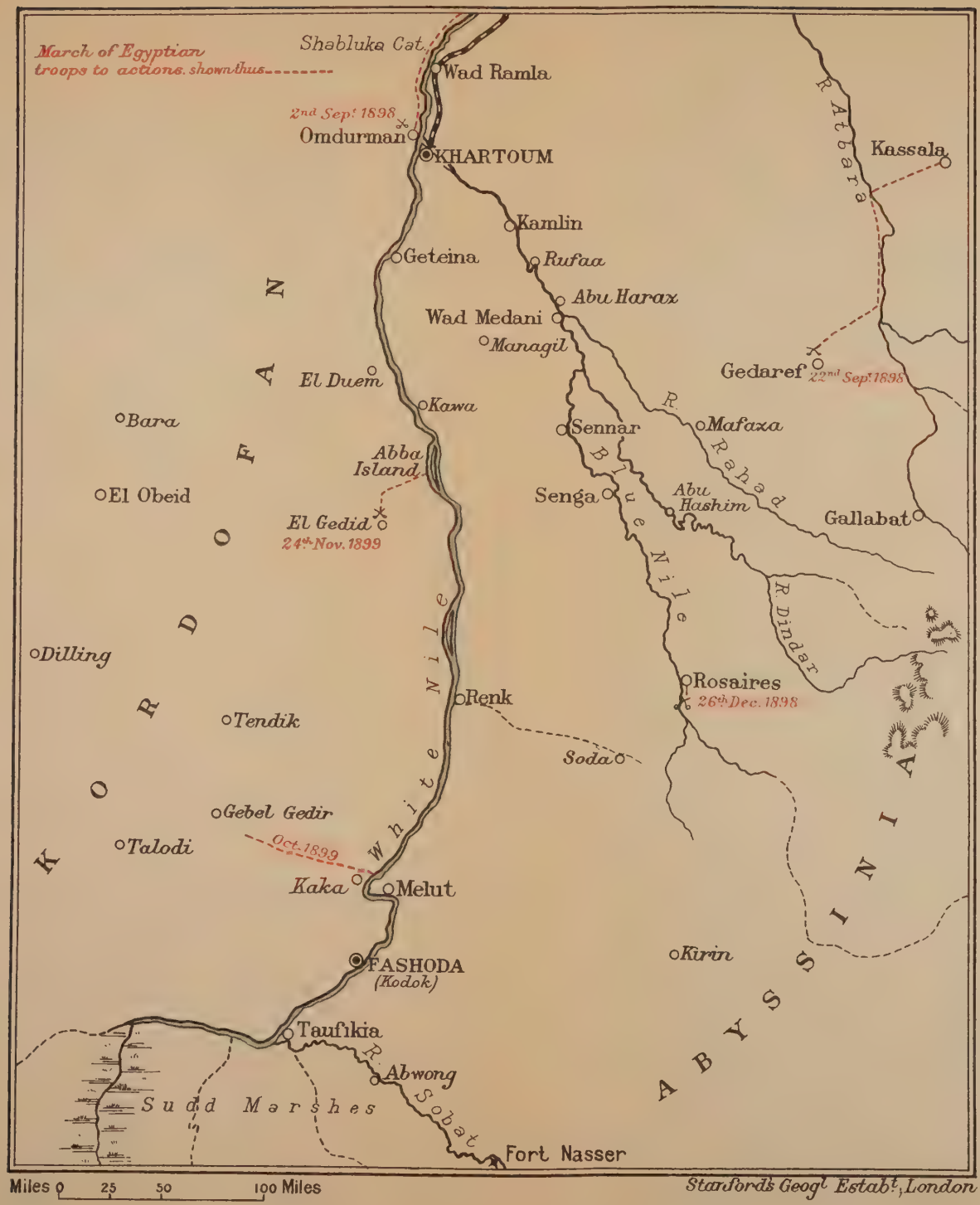
Next morning, November 13, the 9th and 13th Sudanese battalions left for the scene of action and occupied Ahmed Fedil's camp without resistance. He was evidently on a grain-looting expedition, preparing food depôts for his uncle's march on Omdurman. Lord Kitchener hurried from Cairo whither he had gone to consult Lord Cromer on the Sudan budget, and appointed Colonel Sir R. Wingate to command the following field force for operations in Kordofan :

Cavalry, one troop (Capt. Bulkeley Johnson) . . .	30	men.
Artillery, one battery (Capt. Simpson-Baikie). . .	120	,,
Maxims, six guns (Capt. Franks)	40	,,
Camel Corps (Lieut.-Col. Henry)	450	,,
9th Sudanese (Major Doran)	800	,,
13th Sudanese (Major Maxse)	800	,,
2nd Egyptians, one Company (Egyptian Captain) . .	100	,,
Total . .	2,340	,,

Colonel Lewis commanded the infantry of the above, and 900 irregulars under Major Gorringe were added to the force, whose transport consisted of 870 camels.

Starting from the Nile on November 21, the column marched sixty miles in sixty-one consecutive hours, fought two successful actions, destroyed the Khalifa, his principal Emirs and the last remnant of Dervish power, and returned on the 29th with 3000 prisoners of war.

EGYPTIAN SUDAN Nº 2



The Khalifa and all his chiefs—men whom we had sometimes called cowards—died at the head of their faithful followers, charging home with the bravery of despair against our disciplined blacks. Their deaths were more glorious than their lives and certainly more beneficial to the Sudan, which has since made surprising strides on the path of progress and prosperity. The action is known as the battle of El Gedid where it was fought.

But Vandeleur was not to see the results of peace; for on November 30, he started for Cairo and London, on his way to the Boer War in South Africa and said good-bye to the Egyptian army in which he had spent two happy and successful years.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE BOER WAR

TRAVELLING with five other officers—the first to leave the Sudan for the Boer War—Major Vandeleur embarked at Alexandria for Marseilles, where he arrived on December 13, 1899, and heard of Gatacre's disaster at Stormberg. Passing through Paris, he learnt of Methuen's misfortune at Magersfontein, and, on reaching London, of Buller's defeat at Colenso and the appointment of Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. He spent six days in London, which was steeped in the gloom of Black Week, and was then very glad to embark at Southampton on the first outgoing troop-ship. Indeed England at that time presented a sorry spectacle of impotent disappointment and was no place for an officer who knew something of the actualities of war. All classes were overcome by the unreasoning despair which a military reverse must always engender in a people who consistently refuse to face war as a serious business. This was not realised at the time and is not generally realised now, but many thinking men are aware that it is futile to rely upon the patriotism of individuals whose personal service is not recognised as a DUTY to the State.

Our first and only Army-Corps, instead of marching as proposed from Cape Colony to Pretoria "in a few months," lay inert along a front of 500 miles from Modder River to Natal checked at every point. Eng-

land indulged in no recrimination against individuals, but cried aloud that "something must be done"—the usual British formula. The fate of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking depended upon fresh troops being sent out, but these were not immediately available. We had never contemplated a big war and therefore possessed no plan or scheme for organising either a large professional army or a nation in arms. There was no sufficient reserve of trained officers, or even of horses, guns, saddlery, ammunition and equipment. Since Waterloo we had, in a military sense, lived from hand to mouth—fed on theories about the wickedness of all wars, lulled into false security by contemplating our wealth and our area, satisfied with the smug conviction that we are not as other men. Even the tattered "corner-boy" loafing up the Strand had been taught that his precious existence was more valuable than that of any private soldier of the Queen.

Yet in spite of all these drawbacks the heart of the British people beat sound during the crisis of Black Week, or we should not have carried through the South African War. The rough, untutored patriotism of the nation was even in the mood to respond to any demand which might have been made upon it by persons in authority. But unfortunately our public men failed to rise to the occasion and grasp the elementary notion that it is the citizen's privilege to serve the State in defence of its liberties and its existence. Thus the new-found national spirit was frittered away instead of being crystallised into a permanent factor, and the great bulk of the people did nothing more than cheer the patriotic action of the few who voluntarily came forward with definite offers of personal service. These were forthcoming in all parts of our wide dominion, but no one had previously thought out the best method,

or indeed any method of organising emergency troops ; so the matter was left to the private enterprise of a small number of energetic and generous men. Our existing Yeomanry and Volunteer Forces had never been called out and could not be put on a war footing —even for home defence. We were therefore largely dependent on newly raised, scratch corps, equipped on the spur of the moment. Thus, by dint of the unlimited enthusiasm of a few civilians, a number of armed men were hustled on board ship in England, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and despatched to the seat of war. The fact that many of these excellent volunteers had to learn to shoot, cook and ride in the presence of the enemy in no way lessens the gratitude we owe them for the assistance they rendered so promptly. But nevertheless, an Empire which remains content to entrust its defence to private enterprise is certain to fare very badly in conflict with a trained nation on the field of battle.

On the present occasion we fortunately had to deal with only two small republics whose people, though better organised for war than ourselves owing to their system of universal service, were averse to discipline and therefore incapable of driving home concerted attacks or embarking upon a vigorous initiative. They enjoyed the advantages of being on the spot, in their own country, and six months ahead of us in their preparations for war. But they failed to benefit as they should have done by their own initial successes and our original blunders.

On January 10, 1900, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener landed at Capetown, where they found an immense task awaiting them before an army capable of leaving a railway line could be put into the field. Yet it was essential to Lord Roberts' plan of campaign

to have such an army at his command, and that quickly. It does not, however, come within the scope of this chapter to give even a brief outline of the Boer War, as it may fairly be assumed that my readers are acquainted with those volumes of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* which have already appeared. Yet some indication of the general situation in Cape Colony at the time of Major Vandeleur's landing, January 17, must be given, if we are clearly to understand the work he was called upon to perform.

Methuen was holding on at Modder River with the 1st Division and a force safeguarding the single line of railway connecting him with De Aar and Capetown. Gatacre was similarly holding Sterkstroom and the railway to East London. Between these two distant bodies, French had for two months been playing a most skilful game against superior Boer forces near Colesberg, and had succeeded by a policy of bluff and bold tactics in preventing the invasion of the southern districts of Cape Colony. At Naauwpoort he held the railway line to Port Elizabeth.

The 6th Division under General Kelly-Kenny landed early in January. The 7th Division under General Tucker was due to reach Capetown later in the month, as also several artillery and other units. The 9th Division was in process of formation. In fact there were plenty of regulars at or hurrying to the theatre of operations, but they could not yet be called a field army. The Cavalry Division was gradually collecting, but there was still a sad dearth of mounted troops—owing to the policy which had dictated the famous telegram to the colonies, "infantry preferred." Lord Roberts therefore set to work to make good this deficiency by converting 4000 regular infantry soldiers into eight battalions of mounted infantry. These men were at

first as untrained as their recently landed horses, but in process of time developed into an admirable force. He likewise raised a number of South African Colonial Corps during January. But, to enable his army to move through an inhospitable country without a railway, the greatest necessity was a service of mobile transport, and this he directed Lord Kitchener to prepare the very day after they reached Capetown.

The Commander-in-Chief's plan was to strike at Bloemfontein in the heart of the Free State from the western railway between Orange River and Modder River, with 30,000 men—his object being to interpose this force between Cronje's 9000 Boers at Magersfontein and Kimberley and their base. The march to Bloemfontein, 100 miles, would also place him in rear of 7000 Boers near Colesberg and give him possession of the railway through the Free State. To be successful, this flank march within striking distance of Cronje must be sprung upon the Boers as a complete surprise and then be carried out with the utmost rapidity. To move slowly to a flank and give the enemy time to concentrate upon it at leisure was the very thing which Lord Roberts meant to avoid: and, contrary to other experiences in the campaign, he did avoid it. The result was complete and altogether dramatic. In a single week (February 11 to 18) the whole face of the war was altered to our advantage. Cronje's flight was arrested at Paardeberg, where 4141 Boers subsequently surrendered as prisoners of war: Bloemfontein was captured: and all the Commandos south of the Orange River retreated north in a panic.

The story of this success is so simple, so obvious and so natural, when narrated at this distance of time and in the light of our present information, that we are apt to forget the situation as it presented itself before

Lord Roberts took command. But the fact is that the Battle of Paardeberg could not have been won by him or by any one else until the army in Cape Colony was fundamentally re-organised, and this was particularly the case with regard to the transport. Therefore, as Vandeleur was one of the first officers selected for this special duty, we will revert to the beginning of January and consider the condition of this service.

Just as the heterogeneous assemblage of battalions, batteries and squadrons did not constitute an efficient field army, so likewise a quantity of waggons, mules, oxen, harness and " boys "—scattered over a wide area —did not produce mobile transport. The fault, if any, lay with the erroneous conception with which we started to fight the Boers at the outset of the war, not with the Army Service Corps whose work throughout the operations was admirable. The original Army-Corps sent out from home was provided with an adequate transport for the campaign it was intended to undertake—involving a march up the central railway from the coast to Bloemfontein and Pretoria. Its transport, as well as the Supply Department was placed, in accordance with the carefully planned system of the British Army, under the senior Army Service Corps officer attached to the General's staff. Thus supply and transport were twin-brothers working hand-in-hand which in a small force is an excellent arrangement. The scheme was elaborate in detail and carried out the principle of decentralisation to its logical conclusion. Each battalion, brigade and division was allotted a separate set of vehicles for its own exclusive use. The waggons when handed over to a battalion became practically its property during the campaign, and were looked after by one of its officers. Hence the system came to be called the regimental system, and was much

favoured by regimental officers. The waggons accompanied the battalion wherever it went but, as they only carried food for two days, required constant replenishing. This was provided for by *supply columns* which accompanied the brigade or division, carrying rations to the regimental waggons from the real carriers of the army's food and forage—namely the *supply park*. The latter moved in rear and drew upon the railways.

The merit of the system was that battalions always had waggons at their disposal, that the *personnel* of these waggons was in charge of the battalions which employed it, and that the officers in most cases took a pride in the well-being of the animals. But it also had grave defects. It frittered away a quantity of vehicles in supply columns and much time was spent in loading and unloading ; it wasted the waggons of the numerous battalions and brigades which have to remain stationary during long periods in any campaign ; and it was practically inapplicable to South Africa where one part of the army, holding railways, bridges and lines of block-houses could do with only a few carts, whereas another part, being perpetually on trek in pursuit of Boers, required more than the regulation allowance of transport. Thus, the regimental system provided for a set of conditions which it was hoped would prevail but was too inelastic to cope with the actualities of the war.

On the other hand, the system favoured by the new Commander-in-Chief and his Chief of the Staff was no copy of either Indian or Egyptian methods, but was dictated solely by the necessities of the situation. They found their transport squandered about the country, fixed to diminutive units and incapable of being rapidly concentrated for the surprise march on Bloemfontein which they were determined to carry out. Yet success

in war so largely depends upon strategic surprise that a system which impedes it must be fundamentally faulty. It was therefore decided to impound the regimental waggons, except the First Line Transport—viz.: water-carts, ammunition-carts, ambulances and the technical vehicles of engineer and other units, all of which are part of their indispensable equipment. The supply columns were likewise impounded from brigades and divisions, and the whole of the mule-waggons thus withdrawn were reformed into companies of forty-nine each, under a major or captain specially detailed to command them. Thus the mobile transport was amalgamated into one service under the Director of Transport, who also controlled the supply-park, consisting of ox-waggons. Such a serious change on the eve of a campaign could only be justified by considerations of paramount weight, which were not at the time understood by the regimental officers whose waggons were taken from them, or by those departmental officers who were wedded to the system which they knew. But Vandeleur and others qualified to judge by service in the Transport, soon became convinced that the elasticity of the newer system outweighed the inconveniences of the change and justified—on active service—the principle upon which it was founded. For, when shorn of its highly technical details, a mobile transport is merely the carrier of food and forage from the nearest available depôt to the mouths of the soldier and the horse in the fighting line. The ownership of the waggon is of minor importance provided the soldier is fed, and fed he was throughout the war with remarkable regularity, in spite of numerous difficulties, by the new companies which combined the duties of regimental transport and supply column under one officer. The

latter's business was to maintain touch with the men he had to feed, however scattered they might be; to be posted with the latest information regarding probable moves and the position of the supply-park; to replenish empty waggons wherever possible; to feed and care for his mules (ten to each waggon); to pay his non-commissioned officers and Cape-boys; and to know exactly where all his waggons were when detached on odd jobs. It meant plenty of work for an active man during such a campaign as we were engaged in, and necessitated an intelligent appreciation of coming events.

In the middle of January 1900 Vandeleur was posted to the command of one of these companies at De Aar during the process of its formation, and we will now follow his fortunes to Bloemfontein and beyond.

De Aar, a horrible, dusty, wind-swept railway junction, connecting Kimberley, Naauwpoort and Capetown, one of those necessary camps on the lines of communication which every officer and man is always longing to leave, was the scene of feverish activity during the reorganisation. A mule company, complete with animals, equipment and *personnel* takes time to create, and, as forty of them were in process of formation in various places and in a great hurry, Vandeleur had to keep alert to avoid being left out of the scramble for essential necessaries. By the end of January his company was ready to march to Orange River Station. Several of the American and Italian mules died on the journey though the waggons were empty, but Seymour reached his destination in good time and found himself in the vortex of the great concentration early in February. Troop-trains from Capetown, Naauwpoort and other places were perpetually passing through and depositing their loads at

various camps between Orange River and Modder. At last the Headquarter Staff arrived, Vandeleur was hurriedly ordered to Graspan thirty miles north, and on February 11 found himself attached to Kelly-Kenny's 6th Division as its senior transport officer for the march. Next day the army of 30,000 combatants quitted the railway in an easterly direction to Ramdam, and Vandeleur noted in his diary the impressive spectacle which it presented on the move.

As far as the eye could see the veldt was alive with troops. Thin clouds of dust some miles in front marked the progress of the cavalry division, screening the movement with its widely extended squadrons ; thicker dust-clouds denoted infantry brigades toiling slowly behind ; whilst the thickest and blackest were raised by loaded mule waggons straining in rear. Ramdam's lake afforded ample water for the night's bivouac, and next day the army moved on across the Riet, where Vandeleur had his first experience of the difficulty attending the passage of a "drift" by a crowd of waggons, one by one. South African rivers are mostly deep, wide ditches along the bottom of which flows a few feet of water ; they are very rarely bridged, and a drift is merely a place where the steep bank has been cut down to a ford. These are few in number and cannot be negotiated by more than one vehicle at a time. Thus at Waterval Drift Vandeleur had to work all night to get his baggage across the Riet and on to Wagdrei, where it bivouacked on the 14th. The same night at 11.30 his Division started for Modder River to relieve the cavalry at Klip Drift and enable French to make his dash for Kimberley. On the 15th Kimberley was relieved and Cronje bolted from Magersfontein, in a panic, across our front to reach his base at Bloemfontein. On the 16th we fought his rearguard all day.

Throughout the 17th we pursued him in hot haste and continued the pursuit through most of the night to Paardeberg Drift. On the 18th we pinned him to his laager by a desperate infantry attack, simultaneously heading him off with a cavalry brigade from Kimberley.

During this strenuous week neither troops nor transport had a decent sleep or a square meal; but Kimberley was relieved, Cronje surrounded, the British had gained their first real success, and Roberts stood by till his foe should be compelled to surrender. This occurred on February 27, the anniversary of our Majuba defeat, and as Vandeleur was an eye-witness of the event an extract from his diary will be of interest—

". . . A great deal of firing was heard at 3 A.M. which proved to be the Canadians attacking the trenches. They got within sixty yards and the Engineers dug a trench which enfiladed the Boer lines. I rode out at dawn to our first line on Battery Hill and joined Colonel Higson commanding the 13th Brigade and his *aide-de-camp*, who were meeting a flag of truce brought out by two Boers. Their letter of surrender was at once sent on to Lord Roberts, who directed Cronje himself to appear. The two Boers on rather nice ponies rode back to the laager, and in some excitement we awaited Cronje's arrival, at a point about a thousand yards from his lines. In about half an hour P. Cronje and another appeared. He was rather fat, red-faced above his beard, a hard-looking man in blue serge trousers, brown boots, yellow overcoat and big felt hat with orange ribbon, riding a grey pony. He only spoke Dutch and, after a hurried 'good-morning' rode off with a staff officer to Lord Roberts, with whom he breakfasted. All details of the surrender were left

with Commandant Wolmarans and General Kelly-Kenny with whom I returned to breakfast. Then I rode down with him to the drift where the Boers were collected, carrying their blankets and a few necessaries. The Buffs, acting as guard, formed up in line some distance from them. The Boers were distributed in parties and counted. Result—Free Staters 1131, Transvaalers 2620, Passed down the river (not counted by us) 250, wounded 140. Total = 4141. It was a great sight and they were a fine-looking lot of men."

During the operations which culminated in this result the 6th Division had suffered its full share of casualties; Vandeleur's transport had come under a very accurate and disagreeable pompom fire from the Boer laager, and was only saved from a stampede by his promptitude and presence of mind.

The day following Cronje's capitulation the Boers in Natal also gave way, Ladysmith was relieved and Roberts' army began to look wistfully towards Bloemfontein. But a disaster to half the supply-park at Waterval Drift, where 170 loaded ox-waggons were destroyed or captured by De Wet on February 15, had curtailed the available rations and forage and rendered a delay imperative. Moreover, heavy rains turned the veldt into a quagmire and seriously impeded the reduced transport service plying from both Modder and Kimberley to Paardeberg, and, though the troops were put on half-rations and the animals on a quarter of their forage allowance, no sufficient accumulation of supplies had been made to warrant an immediate advance. Meanwhile the Boers were concentrating at Poplar Grove to dispute our progress; the Presidents of the two Republics were in the field with their commandos, exhorting them to stand and defend

the capital; and everything pointed to a stubborn encounter when, on March 7, the army deployed for a carefully planned attack on the Boer flank. But, owing to various tactical delays which Lord Roberts deplored more than any one, the enemy were merely manœuvred out of their position and permitted to retreat unscathed —pursued by us at a leisurely pace. At Driefontein, however, on the 10th we again came up with them, and this time a vigorous attack, driven home with great spirit by the 6th Division, inflicted a loss of over 100 killed and more wounded, and pushed the Boers in headlong flight from their kopjes to Bloemfontein and beyond. Vandeleur was with his divisional staff—the proper place for the senior transport officer in an action—and remained under fire most of the day. His waggons also received the unwelcome attentions of a certain Creusot gun, which burst shells over them at 6000 yards range and caused them to shift with considerable alacrity.

Next day the army continued its march, and Bloemfontein was occupied without further opposition. At six in the evening the Guards Brigade, having covered thirty-seven miles in twenty-six consecutive hours, entered the town, and next morning Pole-Carew with the Grenadiers, Scots Guards and four guns moved by train 100 miles to Springfontein, where he met Gatacre's scouts from the south. This feat was made possible by the daring of Major Hunter-Weston, who with a party of ten mounted sappers blew up a culvert on the railway north of Bloemfontein before the Boers evacuated, and thus secured eleven engines and 100 trucks which were of the utmost value.

During the pause of six weeks which occurred before Roberts was ready to begin his great march to Johannesburg and Pretoria a number of minor engagements

took place in the south of the Free State. Ladybrand was occupied by our cavalry: Karree Siding, north of Bloemfontein, was taken possession of by the 7th Division, which ousted the Boers: Sanna's Post was the scene of an unfortunate surprise, in which we lost eight guns and much transport: Reddersburg was a most "regrettable incident," in which 400 of Gatacre's men surrendered: Wepener was strenuously attacked but gallantly held by Brabant's Colonials. Meanwhile the bulk of the army remained at Bloemfontein, railway communication with Cape Colony was re-opened, reinforcements of men, horses, mules and supplies were brought up, and all was made ready for the next stage of the campaign.

During his stay in Bloemfontein Vandeleur was much gratified by hearing from Kelly-Kenny that he had been mentioned in despatches, and the general added a warm tribute of congratulation on his management of the transport throughout the previous operations. Then Lord Erroll, who was appointed to command a brigade of the Yeomanry on its way out from home, offered him the post of Brigade-Major, but Kitchener declared that transport was a far more important service and refused to sanction the proposal. On the same day the following official telegram from the War Office was put into Seymour's hands—"Will you accept transfer as senior captan new Irish Guards Regiment?" This meant promotion from junior captain in the Scots Guards at once and a certainty of further advancement in the near future, but he hesitated a great deal before replying, on account of his affection for his old regiment and his dislike of leaving it. It was, however, a compliment to be selected for transfer and, as an Irishman, Seymour was very proud of the honour—so he telegraphed his acceptance on the

condition that he should continue on special service during the remainder of the war.

Meanwhile Kitchener had another post in view for him, that of Senior Transport officer on the staff of Major-General Hutton, just appointed to command the 1st Mounted Infantry Brigade. It was in process of formation and was to consist of the following troops :

1st Brigade Mounted Infantry

1st Mounted Infantry Corps (*Lieut.-Colonel Alderson*).
1st Battalion Mounted Infantry ; 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles ; 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles ; Strathcona's Horse.

2nd Mounted Infantry Corps (*Lieut.-Colonel De Lisle*).
6th Battalion Mounted Infantry ; New South Wales Mounted Rifles ; West Australian Mounted Infantry.

3rd Mounted Infantry Corps (*Lieut.-Colonel Pilcher*).
3rd Battalion Mounted Infantry ; Queensland Mounted Rifles ; New Zealand Mounted Infantry.

4th Mounted Infantry Corps (*Lieut.-Colonel Henry*).
4th Battalion Mounted Infantry ; South Australian Mounted Rifles ; Victorian Mounted Rifles ; Tasmanian Mounted Infantry.

Also a Battery, R.H.A. ; four sections Pompoms, R.A. ; twenty Machine Guns ; one company Australian Pioneers ; a Bearer Company, N.S.W. Army Medical Corps.

Total = 303 officers, 6076 men, 6347 horses.

A volume might well be devoted to the organisation of Mounted Infantry and another to the services rendered by the various corps which were pitch-forked into the middle of this campaign, because Britons do not give personal service to the State until a war is half lost. Everything had to be initiated in a hurry, with a consequent loss of efficiency, driving-power and hardness in officers, men and horses. Starting with such a handicap, it is remarkable that the two mounted infantry brigades were as good as they undoubtedly proved themselves, and we are led to the inevitable conclusion that if four such units as the one detailed

above had been raised, equipped and trained for one year instead of for one week, their mobility, dash and discipline would have averted our ignominious performances at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso, and might have reduced the duration of the war by a half and its cost by £100,000,000 to £200,000,000. This, however, is not the place to dilate upon the permanent weakness of the British Empire; nor do I deem it necessary to pursue Vandeleur from bivouac to bivouac—there were no tents—with Hûtton's Brigade which, together with French's cavalry, manœuvred and fought as the left wing of Roberts' army (39,000 men) throughout its march from Bloemfontein to Pretoria. The start was made on May 1. The Boers were never once seriously tackled during this memorable invasion but were adroitly manœuvred out of all their positions; and, as the old saying goes, "they lived to fight another day."

On May 18 the situation was roughly as follows—Roberts at Kroonstad; Buller at Newcastle, Natal; Ian Hamilton at Lindley; Methuen at Hoopstad; Hunter at Christiania: Mafeking just relieved. The country was bare, the railway line was wrecked, and the progress of the columns depended on the carrying capacity of the transport, whose officers will all their lives retain a vivid recollection of nights of struggle in almost impassable drifts and days of anxiety to replenish their waggons at the supply-park. Meanwhile on May 3 the mounted force under the able leadership of Hutton turned, by a wide circling march, all the Boer positions about Brandfort and the Vet River, and, after a stiff fight on their flank, forced the enemy into a confused retreat towards Kroonstad. It was during such movements that the organising capacity of Vandeleur became apparent and that, through his energy and resource-

fulness, the troops were fed as soon as they reached their bivouac after an action. To him therefore is due a great deal of the credit which the mounted men got for their mobility, for without the prompt supplies with which he continually furnished them no wide turning movements would have been possible. On the 9th Hutton's brigade was joined by the cavalry under French, and, thenceforward to the Battle of Diamond Hill on June 12 the two were practically united into one command under the latter general. Their flank movement on the left of the enemy included the action of the Zand River, the taking of Kroonstad, the turning of the Vaal, the occupation of Johannesburg and Pretoria and materially contributed to Lord Roberts' successful advance. On the right Ian Hamilton circling even further from the centre fought many engagements, brushing aside all opposition at Winburg, Lindley and Heilbron : whilst at the Battle of Johannesburg his Gordon Highlanders showed that quality of stolid, enduring pluck which makes the British soldier such a hard man to beat in a protracted campaign. Johannesburg and the gold-mines were found intact, notwithstanding Boer threats of destruction and the problem of the future was to guard the 265 miles of railway back to Bloemfontein from the depredations of the unbeaten Free Staters. Nevertheless Lord Roberts determined to push on at once and occupy Pretoria which he did on June 5—five weeks after leaving Bloemfontein.

After this success most men in England and in the army in South Africa believed the war was practically over, and so it certainly would have been in any organised community in Europe. We held the capitals of the two Republics, the main line of railway and all the towns on it ; the mines, whose wealth had enabled

the Boers to prepare for the war and keep it going, were in our possession ; Kruger and Steyn were fugitive presidents, the one in a railway carriage on the Lorenzo Marques line, the other in the eastern districts of the Free State ; the Hollander officials and other hostile foreigners had no more stomach for fighting, and were leaving the sinking ship after clamouring for arrears of pay and "legalising" the monopolies, securities and shares which some of them had plundered from the Rand. But the back-country, agricultural Boers, the men who held the Mausers and required neither government pay nor government rations, had not once been properly beaten in a fight to a finish, had rarely seen many of their dead comrades lying about as mute evidence of disaster, had not yet realised what the newspapers call the "horrors of war." They had been out-manœuvred by superior forces and compelled to abandon positions which they meant to hold, but had ridden away with whole skins—fortified by practical experience in the field and not much lowered in *morale*. Being of a stubborn race and having become hardened and proficient in war now that the weak and incompetent were eliminated, they found themselves still amply provided with food, horses and ammunition and unable to see why they should give in voluntarily to an invader merely because he held the railways and towns which they had always disliked. On the contrary, their opportunity had at last arrived, and this they proved by two long years of incessant guerilla warfare under the new and able leaders whom the war had thrown up. From Pietersburg in the northern Transvaal to Graaff Reinet in southern Cape Colony their raids spread gradually east and west and occupied our army without pause or respite. From month to month and from year to year the scene shifted from place to place ;

the commandos dodged, countermarched, disappeared in the night to reappear elsewhere ; British columns—as obstinate as their opponents—pursued, surrounded and harried them, successfully and unsuccessfully, suffering occasional reverses but steadily gaining ground till they finally compelled a satisfactory surrender and the complete disarmament of every Boer with a rifle. It entailed a long and tedious campaign which could only be successfully terminated if the grit of the British people remained uncompromising and enduring. Fortunately it never wavered or failed in spite of Pro-Boers and others who counselled peace at any price, and thus we at last reached a solution which promises permanent, beneficial results to the future South African Nation.

But we must revert to the first days of the occupation of Pretoria in order to follow Vandeleur's personal experiences in the guerilla war. He remained on Hutton's staff and was present at the Battle of Diamond Hill, east of Pretoria, where Botha made a gallant stand before retiring to Middelburg. He states that until remounted his brigade together with the two cavalry brigades under French only mustered 1300 horses fit for duty between them, at the end of their arduous march from the south. Meanwhile commandos and bands of Boers hovered round Pretoria, Johannesburg and other towns and De Wet in the Free State had captured a battalion of the Derbyshire Militia, had firmly established himself on the railway and had destroyed several trains carrying three weeks' mail for the whole army. Hutton was first sent to the Magaliesberg Hills, west of Pretoria, to disperse Boer bands and join hands with Baden-Powell, on his way from Mafeking; then to the south-east of the capital where for three weeks he was daily in touch with and

fighting commandos under Botha to keep the railway intact. During the second week of July occurred the unfortunate defeat and capture of one of our detachments at Zilikat's Nek, where some companies of the Lincolnshire Regiment, a squadron of the Greys and two Horse Artillery guns surrendered. Minor successes of this kind were always magnified by the Boers into victories of first-rate importance and had the inconvenient result of encouraging their resistance and considerably prolonging the war. Hutton's command had proof of this in a fight the following week, when a strong force of Boers under Viljoen made a desperate attempt to break through to Pretoria but were repulsed all along the line. Towards the end of the month we find him at Middelburg with more Boers all round, but the news of Prinsloo's surrender with 4800 men to Hunter in the Free State had a discouraging effect on the enemy, keeping them quiet in their laagers and very wary against surprise.

Meanwhile in Pretoria a plot was hatched by Lieutenant Cordua—a regular officer of the Staat's Artillery and a naturalised German—to capture Lord Roberts in the night and carry him off to the enemy's camp. It was a mean and dastardly enterprise, for the Commander-in-Chief had exercised special clemency in permitting Cordua to remain in the town *on parole* and his men to revert to peaceful citizenship, on condition they took no further part in hostilities. The reason given for this lenient treatment was that the Staat's Artillery and Zarps, from whom the conspirators were drawn, had represented themselves as the paid servants of the Republic with no means of livelihood when the Boer government decamped. Cordua was tried in open court, found guilty and sentenced to be shot. His confederates to the number of 300 were deported to

Ceylon. Throughout August and September operations on a considerable scale were carried out between Middelburg and Komati Poort, as also in the Lydenburg and Barberton Districts on both sides of the railway to Lorenzo Marques. Lord Roberts himself moved to Belfast where the Guards Brigade was in bivouac ; Buller, advancing through Ermelo, at last reached the railway and attacked Dalmanutha, driving away the Boers with heavy loss ; Ian Hamilton with a strong division of mounted men and infantry arrived at Belfast, and Vandeleur was transferred from Hutton's Brigade, now much reduced in strength, to Ian Hamilton, as staff officer in charge of his numerous mule-transport. This was not only promotion to a bigger command, but also involved Seymour in the active operations which culminated in the capture of Lydenburg and occupation of Komati Poort, on the border of Portuguese East Africa. Here a parade was held by Pole-Carew, in honour of the birthday of the King of Portugal, to which a special train conveyed Portuguese officers and a number of ladies from the coast. After this Vandeleur obtained two days' leave, bought a white duck suit at a store and paid a surreptitious visit to Lorenzo Marques, where he saw ex-President Kruger emerging from the Governor's house, where he was living, to go for a drive in the town. The place was full of Hollanders, Frenchmen, Italians and Irish—lately in the service of our enemies, now strolling about with nothing to do. The bay struck Vandeleur as quite beautiful and the whole place impressed him favourably.

In October Hamilton's force was broken up in Pretoria and Seymour was granted a few months' leave to recuperate in England. He selected the Durban route, in order to visit the battlefields of Natal.

Several days were thus spent in riding round the Ladysmith Defences and exploring Spion Kop, Pieters Hill, Colenso and Majuba, but on reaching Durban early in November he was met by a telegram ordering him back to Pretoria, in order to take command of a contingent of Australian Bushmen serving under General Paget in the Rustenburg district. He was delighted at the prospect, for—like every ambitious soldier—he was longing to obtain an independent command in the field. He well knew how great a difference there is between the work of the highest staff officer, responsible for carrying out the orders of another, and that of an independent commander acting on his own initiative. Moreover, Vandeleur was thoroughly fitted by training, experience and his own natural aptitudes for the command he desired, and we may therefore judge how bitter was his disappointment on learning at Pretoria that the G.O.C. on the spot had already filled the post. This was perhaps the greatest personal disappointment Seymour ever had to face, and he faced it with the equanimity and sound good sense which distinguished him throughout his career and gave to his character a touch of sublime composure, whenever difficulties arose. Instead of again starting on his homeward journey as nine out of ten other men would have done under similar circumstances, he made up his mind to stay quietly in Pretoria and, as his real value had been appreciated and reported upon by all the generals under whom he served, he had not long to wait for recognition and employment.

At the end of November Lord Roberts made over the army in South Africa to Lord Kitchener and returned to London, to take up the appointment of Commander-in-Chief. On the 29th Kitchener sent for Vandeleur and offered him the command of the 2nd Mounted

Infantry Battalion, which happened to be the first to fall vacant. It formed part of the 6th Mounted Infantry Corps and was at that time engaged with Major-General Clements' force against several commandos under De la Rey. Hopes were held out to Vandeleur that, after a period of duty with this battalion, he might expect promotion to the command of a Mounted Infantry Corps or possibly an independent column of all arms. But, before he could join from Pretoria, Clements was surprised at Nooitgedacht, suffering a loss of 400 casualties and of most of his horses and mules. Out of 190 men of the 2nd M.I. present in the action no less than 90 were killed and wounded, and the officer acting as its commander was shot. It was under these depressing circumstances that Seymour took over its command in the Magaliesberg Hills, near the scene of the recent fight, and found he could muster but 250 men, including the recruits who had just joined from Krugersdorp. Our reverse in this district, occurring so soon after the capture of five infantry companies and two guns by De Wet and Steyn at Dewetsdorp in the Free State, fanned the flame of guerilla warfare into renewed activity, and Vandeleur was almost daily in action right up to the end of the year 1900. One description, however, will suffice to give the reader some insight into the work which constantly engaged the Mounted Infantry. On December 19 Clements' force marched to attack a Boer position which stretched across a valley from Nooitgedacht to Hekpoort, in the Rustenburg District. The 6th Corps started at 3.30 A.M. as advanced guard to the main column and crossed the Magalies River, with the 2nd M.I. in front, followed by four field guns and the 14th M.I. The Boers opened fire from a kopje as soon as our men were over the drift. The guns and

14th were brought up to assist, and Vandeleur with the 2nd M.I. pushed on through some trees under an increasing fire. When he emerged, he saw that his forward scouts were already climbing one of the lower knolls and, being a believer in rapid movement under fire, he decided to make a dash for the crest-line. A mile of open ground separated him from the foot of the kopje, and across this he and his M.I. galloped, fired at from two distant hills on the flanks. Two horses were shot whilst fording a boggy stream, but his troops lined the crest without losing a man, just in time to forestall 150 Boers coming up from the opposite direction. These were routed with considerable loss, one Boer being killed at only twenty-five yards' range. At this point Seymour was obliged to await reinforcements, as the enemy were known to be in strength and French required time to cut them off. When the main column came up the Boers were hustled and pursued for seven miles across country, but as usual they escaped in the dark.

Similar engagements were the order of the day with our elusive enemy throughout his native land, and we who are now privileged to look back on the event can realise how mistaken was our impatience because progress was slow. For we had much to learn when the war opened, and much more to take to heart when it was at last concluded. Great Britain began by expecting her sons to beat the enemy without hurting him; to gain victories without suffering casualties and to obtain these remarkable results in a few months' time and at a moderate price. The lesson of Majuba had apparently been forgotten. But the back-country Boer was not nurtured on the mawkish sentimentality which sometimes masquerades as "magnanimity" in London. He called it by the plain Dutch word which

signifies "funk"; and, when England really meant business, he regarded it as bluff. If therefore a peace had been hastily patched up as soon as Pretoria fell, that is before the war had been carried into the home of the farmer, he would have remained in ignorance of its penalties and a standing menace to peace. Whereas, through the prolongation of hostilities and the multiplication of our mobile columns, the whole country was fought over and occupied from end to end. It was a disagreeable and hateful task for both officers and men and was by no means lightened by the false accusations of cruelty which a few stay-at-home Englishmen levelled at the troops in the field—with no shred of evidence to support them. All through 1900 the war continued, but, as we are only concerned with Vandeleur's work, further reference need not be made to the general situation.

In January 1901 his M.I. Battalion mustered 493 men and 527 horses and, still under Clements, was engaged in safe-guarding convoys marching to and from Rustenburg through a country infested by De la Rey's commandos. As a rule they contented themselves with sniping from a distance, but every now and then assembled for a surprise attack either on a railway line, a camp or a column of marching ox-waggons. Thus on January 24, two days after the death of Queen Victoria, Seymour was out reconnoitring beyond the lines at 5 A.M. when he became aware that more Boers than usual were on foot, evidently concentrating to close on the camp. He at once placed his men in position to check them, for already their shots were inflicting losses on the tethered transport animals. When later it became necessary to reinforce the advance picquets, Seymour and his Sergeant-Major rode forward to a hill in order to dispose the men to the best advan-

tage. Bullets were spattering the rocks, so he cantered on to take cover when, suddenly, he had an impression of a noise and a blow, then a tremendous blow and concussion on the left thigh and he realised he was hit. The Sergeant-Major got him off his horse and bandaged him with the puggaree of his hat ; but he had to lie behind some boulders in very great pain for nearly three hours, under constant fire. Eventually he was carried back—a perilous journey still under fire —and placed in a house around which bullets continued singing all day. The one which hit him in the morning had penetrated the right hip, travelled down the left leg, missing the femoral artery by a fraction of an inch and emerged in front of the left thigh. Mercifully the thigh bone was not broken, but the wound was a very serious and nasty one and was not improved next day when he and an officer with enteric were jolted in an ambulance along a bad road to Krugersdorp Station, *en route* for the Wanderers Club, Johannesburg, in use as an officers' hospital.

After thus trekking for sixty miles it was indeed a comfort to poor Vandeleur to find himself in a hospital where every attention was paid to his wants and the best medical science could be bestowed on his wound. His general health was so good that at the end of a month he was well enough to be moved to Capetown, where his father met him from England. They sailed early in March and, by the time Seymour landed at Southampton, he was able to get about without assistance. At home in Ireland he mended apace, as the weather was fine and his days were mostly spent on a yacht. When the " Honours Gazette " appeared, and he saw his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel at the age of thirty-one, his wound was forgotten and he insisted on going before a Medical Board,

with a view to returning to active service at once He accordingly sailed on July 13, reached Pretoria on August 11 and dined the same evening with Lord Kitchener, whose columns were at last producing an appreciable effect on the Boers still under arms.

I append one among many letters in my possession showing how Vandeleur was appreciated by those under whom he served. It is from Major-General Sir Edward Hutton :

"DEAR COLONEL MAXSE,—It was with mutual pleasure to us both that Seymour Vandeleur reported himself to me at Bloemfontein early in April 1900 as officer in charge of the Transport belonging to the large force which, under Lord Roberts' orders, I was then organising. It is not easy to do full justice to Vandeleur's remarkable success as Transport officer to such a cosmopolitan brigade as mine. It was in itself nearly always twice and at one time nearly three times the size of a Cavalry Division, composed of militia troops from our over-sea self-governing Colonies as well as of regular Mounted Infantry, selected from twenty-eight British regiments. This Force was one especially difficult to handle and doubly difficult to administer as regards transport and supply.

"It was Vandeleur's able and quick powers of organisation and his ready tact in dealing with those under him which enabled him to meet all the demands made upon his administrative capacity. Personally, I never had to give him a single order or to tax him with a single oversight during the whole time he was Chief Transport Officer. Living with me at the head-quarter mess and in constant personal touch with me,

he knew, as by instinct and almost without actual orders from my Chief Staff Officer, what was required of him and his transport.

" His capable arrangements for the evacuation of sick and wounded from the Field Hospital were not the least noteworthy of his services, and the only time I had a difference of opinion with Vandeleur was at the commencement of the critical action upon May 28, 1900, at Oliphants Vlei, before the taking of Johannesburg, when his fighting instinct brought him into the firing line and prompted him to abandon for a few brief moments his important charge, in order to join me in the action.

" You will realise from what I have written how much I owed to Vandeleur for his management of my transport. The Mounted Force with which he played so leading a part had no Press correspondent to chronicle their work, and the splendid service which was rendered by them, one and all, has never been realised by the Public.

" I have said nothing of Vandeleur's personal character, which I perhaps had better opportunities of knowing than many of his friends. He was of those highest and noblest types of British officer whom, it has been said, ' Britain has never failed to find amongst her sons.' The recollection of the high-minded ideal cherished by Vandeleur of his mission in life, the modesty and the moral strength which were peculiarly his characteristics, will ever remain a sacred memory to his friends.

" Believe me,

" Yours very truly,

" EDWARD H. HUTTON, Major-General.

" *London, Nov.* 3, 1905."

CHAPTER XII

THE END

THE war was dragging on to its inevitable conclusion. Some tenacious commandos fighting gamely to the end took every opportunity of pouncing upon insufficiently guarded convoys or wrecking trains for the loot they might contain, but many burghers were growing tired of the precarious and detestable existence to which they were reduced by Kitchener's combination of sweeping columns and lines of block-houses. During Vandeleur's first week in Pretoria 884 Boers surrendered or were captured; whilst north, south, east and west they were being relentlessly harried by our officers and men—now hardened and experienced campaigners.

North of Pretoria the Boer who gave most trouble was Commandant Beyers in the difficult and rugged country known as the Bush-veldt, and against him a strong column under Lt.-Col. Harold Grenfell was operating from Nylstroom, having its base on the railway. This force was composed of the 2nd, 12th and 20th Mounted Infantry Battalions, Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, four field guns and a half battalion of infantry. Grenfell, who had been fighting incessantly since the outbreak of hostilities, stood in need of a rest, and the Commander-in-Chief was looking about for a really good man to succeed him. After carefully considering all other claims, Kitchener selected Lieutenant Colonel Vandeleur for this post and directed him to join the column at Nylstroom when next it came in

touch with that station ; then to accompany it on one trek as Grenfell's subordinate in order to acquaint himself with the force, the country and the circumstances ; and then to take command directly Grenfell went home on leave. Thus the strenuous work of his whole life was to meet with the only reward which could satisfy Seymour's legitimate ambition. It came to him at the age of thirty-two, when he was young enough to feel that his future still lay before him yet experienced enough to act with the ripe judgment of an old hand ! He had seen much of war and knew its difficulties, but to overcome them he possessed, beneath a quiet demeanour and never-failing cheerfulness, the stern quality of grit without which officers cannot successfully command in action. Indeed he was so full of hope and delight at the prospect, that the friends who were with him before he started from Pretoria felt his enthusiasm to be contagious ; and those of us who best appreciated his character and brain-power were convinced that he would prove himself a brilliant commander in the field.

But our belief in him was not to be tested and confirmed, for he never reached his destination.

On Friday, August 30, 1901, he lunched and dined with Colonel Romilly of the Scots Guards, and went down to the railway station at 11 P.M. to sleep in the train, which was to start at dawn next morning for Nylstroom. After a disturbed night spent in shunting, the train of three open trucks and one ordinary corridor-coach left Pretoria with its passengers asleep in fancied security. They included two ladies returning with their children to Pietersburg, Vandeleur, Major Beatson and an escort of non-commissioned officers and men in the armoured truck next the engine. Besides baggage and stores there were also £20,000 in cash, the pay of

the troops in the northern district. The train reached Waterval North, sixteen miles from Pretoria, in safety and should have waited there until the local commandant had definite news that the line to the next station, Haman's Kraal, thirteen miles, was reported clear. The arrangements made for the protection of the railway, in addition to the block-houses and the defence of each station, were that two native "boys" started at midnight from Waterval North and two others from Haman's Kraal. They were to meet half-way between the stations, exchange passes to prove they had met and return to their respective commandants to report on the safety of the line. Telegrams were then to be exchanged between the commandants, and no train ought to have been permitted to start until all these preliminaries were duly completed. Unfortunately on the date in question the train left Waterval North before any report or telegram had come to hand.

Meanwhile the notorious train-wrecker Jack Hindon, an Irishman, had reached a cutting three miles beyond Waterval North with fifty to sixty Boers at midnight, and had placed a dynamite mine beneath the rails. He and his party then concealed themselves in some bushes fifty yards off, leaving a few of their number to watch the cutting. When the two scouts from Waterval North approached they were immediately set upon in the dark, taken prisoners and flogged. The two scouts from Haman's Kraal reached their destination half-way, waited as usual for the others to arrive, and then, suspecting mischief, pluckily advanced along the railway almost as far as the cutting. Here they saw the Boers actually in position on both sides of the line just as the train was approaching from the opposite direction. The engine panted slowly up

the steep gradient towards the trap, whilst on top of the cutting the Boers lay concealed by heaps of excavated earth, ready to fire down on the open trucks. The two scouts ran towards the engine holding up their hands to try and stop it, but the driver did not understand, and the brave "boys" were shot just as the mine was exploded beneath the engine—overturning it and the armoured carriage. At the same instant a fierce musketry fire was poured into every part of the train before its occupants could seize their rifles. Both the ladies were wounded. Vandeleur, in the adjoining compartment, sprang from his seat and rushed out into the corridor—similar to those on our English railways—shouting as loud as he could "Ladies and men, lie down flat." When he reached the door to get out of the carriage and take command of the men he was confronted by a Boer named Uys with a loaded rifle at his shoulder, and was instantly shot dead at two yards' range. Nine non-commissioned officers and men were killed, two officers, fourteen non-commissioned officers and five civilians were wounded. Another mine was exploded some distance behind to prevent help arriving, and the wreckers proceeded to loot and burn the train before they rode off.

Hindon and his gang are branded as murderers and robbers, not only for this shameful deed but also on account of other similar massacres. They were reputed as marauders who feared to fight in the open, but took advantage of the state of war to pillage and plunder belligerents and civilians alike.

The survivors of the disaster were soon succoured from Pretoria, and Vandeleur's body was reverently carried to the capital. On Sunday, September 1, it was laid to its last rest in the cemetery of the English

church, with full military honours. It happened that on this day Vandeleur's old battalion, the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, was moving by train from Springs to Potchefstroom and was thus within reach of Pretoria. In obedience to a telegram from Lord Kitchener the Right Flank company, under Major Godman, was brought up by special train to attend the funeral. And so it came to pass that the final volleys over his grave were fired by the very comrades whom he would have wished for and that the regiment of which he had been so bright an ornament had at least the mournful satisfaction of paying its last tribute to his memory. The Commander-in-Chief, who loved his subordinate, was present with the headquarters staff and all the officers of the garrison ; and a more impressive ceremony, or one tinged with a deeper sorrow and a truer regret it would be difficult to conceive.

Men of Seymour Vandeleur's stamp do not die in their beds and it is in accordance with the life they have chosen that they should meet death in the discharge of duty, and in the service of their country. But in Vandeleur's case it is bitter to think that when the end came he did not fall in the fair field of battle, where his life had been risked on so many occasions. To be the victim of a pitiful highway robbery, murdered in cold blood without the chance of reprisal by a dastardly scoundrel who wrecked trains for loot—such is not the kind of death which his friends can contemplate without a feeling of vengeance in their hearts. Yet, after all, it is a man's life not his death that matters, and the memory of Seymour Vandeleur as he was—a bright, ambitious, happy companion—still lingers with those who follow his calling and sympathise with his spirit. To them he will ever remain an example of straight, young manhood and of a life

spent in the pursuit of that which is best and highest in the profession he loved, heedless of any notoriety it might happen to bring him. To those who have read this memoir of his short career it will be obvious that he possessed a tenacious purpose through life, that he was rapidly developing along the natural lines of his character and that he had emerged, a distinct personality, from the junior ranks of the army. But by those who worked with him for years in different places and had the best opportunities of judging his strength, Vandeleur's death is recognised as a distinct loss to his country. Viewed in this light it was a public calamity, though this was known to few outside his profession.

In these pages I have endeavoured to place before my readers the story of his life, not in the form of a biography but rather by narrating the events in which he took part and discussing the problems which absorbed him. This I feel sure is what he himself would have preferred to a more personal narrative, dwelling less on the work than on the man. Indeed one purpose of this book is to afford to Vandeleur's countrymen a glimpse of what is being done by hundreds of picked officers, who are the real builders of the Dependencies and Crown Colonies of our Empire. They long ago laid the foundations upon which our Indian Dominion was reared; they are now toiling ceaselessly and successfully in such places as Somaliland, Uganda, East Africa, Nigeria, The Egyptian Sudan—in fact wherever the Union Jack flies. Sometimes recognised but more often snubbed by official England, their names are unknown to the British Public and rightly so, because men should not acquire notoriety for merely doing their duty well. Their reward is in the knowledge that they are sowing seed which will ripen into an

abundant harvest whose true value will be appreciated by future generations of Britons. When, however, one of their number is cut off in the prime of his manhood and with his promise unfulfilled, it is meet that the story of his life should be recorded —as an instance of the toll exacted by Empire and a reminder to us who sit at home that there still are men whose pride it is to render service to the State.

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AFRICA

EUROPEAN POSSESSIONS IN 1884.

BEFORE THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

Br.	British	RED
Fr.	French	BLUE
G.	German	ORANGE
It.	Italian	YELLOW
P.	Portuguese	GREEN
Sp.	Spanish	PURPLE

Scale, 1: 30,096,000, 475 English Miles to 1 Inch.

Scale of English Miles

100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600

Tristan da Cunha (British)

Telegraph Cables, thus .....

Drawn & Engraved at Stanford's Geog. Estab.

MAP SHOWING THE PARTITION OF AFRICA 1902.

Note :— *The Egyptian Sudan is under a British & Egyptian Condominium*

Scale. 1: 30.096.000. 475 English Miles to 1 Inch.

Scale of English Miles

100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600

Br Brush Possessions
Fr French
G German
It Italian
P. Portuguese
Sp. Spanish

Telegraph Cables, Gas ...
Railways Gas ——

Tristan da Cunha (BRIT.)

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Seymour Vandeleur.